

HEARTS *VERSUS* HEADS.

A NOVEL.

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HEARTS *VERSUS* HEADS;

OR,

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

INNES HOOLE, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

SCENES AT ^BBRIGHTON SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE, &c

‘ On commence par être dupe,
Et on finit par être trapon ’

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HEARTS *VERSUS* HEADS.

CHAPTER I.

“**L’AMOUR** seul me console : il est ma recompence,
L’objet de mes travaux — l’idole que j’encense !”

Thus spoke Ruth Pleydell, as she gracefully leant over the parapet of a little stone bridge that crossed a stream in the park of Westbrooke; her fine countenance glowing with exercise, and receiving yet perhaps an additional tint, from the tumultuous feelings that throbbed within her bosom. At one time her head rested on her hands, and the luxuriant ebon ringlets contrasted finely with the cold and fretted stonework that

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supported them. Then again her eyes would glance upwards, and there was something whimsical in the look that plainly said—"All will be the same, when once in heaven."

She was then for a time completely abstracted from surrounding objects.— "Sometimes the sinner--sometimes the saint," she muttered to herself, "but always—always the hypocrite; speaking in public the language of imposture, and in private giving way to all the weakness of a hoping, yet doubting lover."

She looked mournfully on a sprig of myrtle she held in her hand; yet so completely was her mind engrossed, that it would have been a question whether or no she perceived it. The reverie was long, but suddenly bursting from it—"He does not care a straw for me, I verily believe," she said aloud; and the flower she held was jerked pettishly into the water. At that moment a foot-
step

step approached her: the brightened eye melted down to the soft look of passion, as, extending her hand, she fondly said—"I wanted but this to make me enjoy the evening!"

"And yet Ruth flies me!" said her companion, in a soft and plaintive tone—"rejects the love I offer, for——"

"Hush! hush!" cried Ruth, fondly pressing her rosy finger on his lip, as a means of interrupting him. "*Prenez garde, mon ami*; let us leave the bridge for terra firma before we undervalue the owner."

There was something playfully sweet in the pretended fright she evinced, as she impatiently conducted him; and pressing back the branches that obstructed their way, they were soon in a refuge, free even from the fear of observation.—"Ruth," said her companion, emphatically, the first to break a pause, that betrayed more than words the ten-

derness that existed between them—
“Ruth!” and there was an energy in his tone, “this evening decides my destiny.” He took both her hands within his.—“Tell me,” he asked, intently reading her eyes—“tell me ^{at} once, will you—do you love me?”

Ruth spoke not, for her feelings overpowered her, and stopped her utterance.

“This night,” he continued, “either establishes it for ever, or dissipates my misery. I have long loved you, Ruth!

“I never framed a wish, or formed a plan,
That flatter'd me with hopes of earthly bliss,
But thou wert there.”

But, sweet Ruth, how could I ever hope? What had I to offer, but a fond—a foolish heart, that will break to find its wild hopes mistaken?”

“Hope every thing!” in faltering accents, Ruth replied; and she would have pronounced his name, but her voice
totally

totally failed her, her eyes closed, and she sunk, fainting, on his shoulder.

“ You look pale, Miss Pleydell,” observed lady Delaware, gazing at her through the twilight, as they were proceeding in the carriage to meet a late dinner-party at the Wrexhams—“ quite pale: dear me! what is the matter?”

“ I have forgotten to put my rouge on, I suppose,” Ruth coolly replied.

Her ladyship was for the moment silenced, but she fidgetted and hemmed, and at length observed—“ Perhaps you do not know it is to be a dress party?”

“ Yes—no,” replied Ruth, with much hesitation; “ that is—” then added with quickness, “ I suppose you mean to say, I am not dressed appropriately.”

“ Always becomingly,” returned her ladyship, graciously smiling, and endeavouring to hide that she was really pro-

voked that Ruth, on this grand occasion, should not have gratified her son's pride, by adorning herself more sumptuously : " she must always look well—must not she, John, dear ?"

" Beautifully !" replied sir John.

" Heavenly !" repeated another voice ; but whether it was the baronet again, colonel Clayton, or John Ladbroke, as they all sat on one seat, no one present could determine.

The Wrexhams had on that day quite a gala : music succeeded the dinner, and a quadrille ball was to finish the evening. Miss Wrexham, quite a proficient on the harp, opened the concert, and Ruth Pleydell was requested to follow her example

" I cannot sing to-night," was the reply given to every solicitation.

" But why ?" demanded sir John, vexed at her declining it.

" I cannot sing to-night," she again replied—" I am too happy."

There

There was a seraphic expression of joy in her countenance as she said this, not consisting of the common merriment of mortals, but a heavenly sentiment that shone through the tears that dimmed her eye's brightness. Sir John knew not very well what to make of it; whether it was better to take it as a compliment to himself, or, by considering it in the light of a solecism in love, say something *piquant* that might resent it. The latter promised most amusement, and he was in the midst of a frivolous discussion upon the subject, when Ruth, to another attempt that was made to induce her to change her determination, rose up, and taking an arm that was near her, walked up to the instrument.

Ruth Pleydell had never looked more beautiful than she did at this moment. There was a negligence in her whole attire that assimilated well with the languor of her countenance: her dark hair

was carelessly brushed back from off her forehead, while the wreath of red roses that surmounted it seemed had recourse to more as an easy method of confining its luxuriance, than placed there for the sake of ornament: her figure was simply attired in a white robe, bearing about it no other decoration than a red rose, that finely contrasted with the whiteness of her bosom.

A pause of breathless impatience followed the perception of her intention: all were anxious to hear the voice of one who so agreeably rivetted the attention. The harp was drawn towards her; she struck a few chords.—“What shall I sing?” turning gracefully to those who crowded round her.

“Oh, let’s have, ‘Is there a heart that never didn’t love?’” said Mrs. Wrexham, placing the song on the music-stand before her.

A smile, not to be suppressed, rose to every

every one's countenance, which Mrs. Wrexham perceiving, she said—"Ah, well, I suppose that's too old a thing to please you!"

"Oh, *Ciel!* yes!" exclaimed Miss Wrexham, who stood near them; "I am quite tired of the songs that Eve sung to Adam: one's taste must vary with custom and fashion."

"My goodness, Charlotte! I wish you'd have the goodness not to cry down my choice," observed Mrs. Wrexham, speaking rather impatiently; "it is a song, I think, that will never be out of fashion—no more it wont—will it, ma'am?" applying for support to Ruth Pleydell.

"Not in theory, whatever it may be in practice," replied Ruth, glancing at Valentine Ladbroke, who was standing listening, with all the coldness of a statue, to the *agacerie* of Miss Wrexham.

But this was all nothing to the pur-

pose; the whole room were impatiently awaiting to hear Ruth sing, and it was essential that she should make another selection. The names of many songs were mentioned, but Ruth shook her head.

“Come, Clayton, think of something,” said the baronet.

“I hate music,” he replied, with an energy unusual to him.

Every one looked shocked, and redoubled their attentions to Ruth; but, smiling archly, she rejected further solicitation, and, rising from her seat, quitted the instrument.

The ball-room was soon thronged with the impatient votaries of Terpsichore.

“Manage to dance with Ruth all the evening,” said lady Delaware to her son, in a whisper, as they moved through the gallery.

The baronet passed on, nodded his head significantly, as though the hint was perfectly unnecessary.

As

As is generally the case in an English ball-room, the men, who, to use their own words, "would as leave be hanged as dance," thronged together at the entry, rendering the egression and regression to the room as difficult as it was to make up a set without them.

"You had better secure partners while you can, gentlemen," said little Miss Wrexham, bustling up to them; "I expect the ——th dragoons from Windsor; therefore your chance will be gone in a minute."

"You are very good," was listlessly repeated by many; but the information had no other effect upon the party. The most indifferent among them was Valentine Ladbroke.

"I cannot understand you, Val," said his brother, who, unperceived by him, was standing near him.

Valentine started.—"What is there ambiguous in me?" he asked, seeming

almost anxious himself to hear his definition.

His brother paused for a moment, and then said—"Answer me one question; but let it be with candour. What are Miss Wrexham's pretensions to your regard? is it true you are her professed lover? Oh, Val! a girl without one single attraction!"

Valentine interrupted him with a laugh, but it was a laugh that proclaimed the heart's bitterness, saying, at the same time—"A girl without any attractions! pshaw, John! out of your own part in the play you are learning, I must undeceive you: she has a lap-dog that eats out of gold—she feeds her parrot with small pearls, and bank-notes compose her *papillotes* and thread-papers! What do you want more of attractions?"

A look passed between the brothers, the one expressing pity, the other that
he

he was the victim of a harsh destiny.—“God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,” said John: “look at Miss Wrexham now, she really looks interesting!”

And so thought Valentine, as he approached her, and heard her tell lady Delaware how unkind it was of her not to let Rosalie Manners partake of their evening’s amusement.—“Come and dance, Charlotte,” he said, leading her to the set that was forming; and Charlotte’s heart beat with joy, sufficient to last her for the whole evening.

The baronet and Ruth were apparently as well satisfied with each other, as were Valentine and Miss Wrexham. Sir John had attended to his mother’s advice; and though Ruth declined dancing, yet he made his attentions equally particular in remaining by her side, and even refrained from dancing himself, that he might be near her. Thus, to lookers-on, every thing was proceeding well; but the

the baronet was constrained to confess to himself that things might have been better. There was a flatness in Ruth, which rather cramped than excited him to be either entertaining or facetious, and he was forced to trust his cause to that single anchorage—his personal perfections. With this, his taper ankle was displayed, his white hand, and she never looked towards him but he smiled to shew his teeth, and languished his eyes at her. He had no doubt but this would turn to his advantage; yet, altogether, to him it was a dull evening, and he was glad to persuade Ruth she was tired, to put an end to it the first opportunity.

Miss Wrexham was an early visitor at the Hall the next morning; she came on horseback, escorted by Valentine; and instinctively feeling the charm that had elicited his unsought attention the preceding evening, she turned towards Ro-
salie

salie the first opportunity, and again deplored her absence.—“ We wanted you sadly,” she observed, “ to assist our concert, for some of the young ladies were so—what shall I call it?”

“ Any thing you please,” coolly interrupted Ruth Pleydell, who felt the stroke intended.

Miss Wrexham blushed a little; but recovering herself, she continued—“ So *modest*, then, we will say, that they sadly disappointed our highly-raised expectations. You sing, of course, Miss Manners?”

The “ of course” rather perplexed Rosalie; but in a moment she replied in the negative.

An elevation of the brows expressed Miss Wrexham’s surprise, as she continued—“ Instrumental music may be all very well; but instrumental music, in its best style, is far less preferable than mediocre vocal. You practise, of course, a
great

great deal—how many hours a-day? It will never repay your labour. How many hours do you give to it?” she again asked, perceiving Rosalie uncertain what to answer.

“Give to what, ma’am?” she at length asked, for the interrogation completely perplexed her.

“To the pianoforte, harp, lyre, whatever instrument you perform on.”

Rosalie looked confounded—the shame of *the girl* came over her. Oh! the mortification to be brought to confess her want of accomplishments before Valentine, his brother, and the baronet! and the blushes burnt upon her cheeks, as, shaking her ringlets over her eyes, she replied, in a voice hoarse from agitation—“I do not play any music at all, ma’am.”

Nothing could equal Miss Wrexham’s professions of astonishment; but perhaps she did not like music, for the
sake

sake of notoriety, she supposed.—“ You hate it then—really hate it? I suppose I must say, how odd! You really do not like it?”

Rosalie declared her conclusion was erroneous, that though she understood nothing about it, from want of opportunity, yet nothing delighted her—nothing charmed her more than the listening to music.

Miss Wrexham raised her eyebrows more than ever, and, giving every sign of mortifying disbelief, she replied—“ Excuse me, Miss Manners; but I never can think that those who do not, by some contrivance, play themselves, I never can give them credit, whatever they may say, for being fond of music.”

Rosalie looked at her for a moment, and the look shewed suppressed indignation. Then turning away with an effort that appeared to be yet more securely to suppress her anger, she said—“ You doubt

doubt my word ; but I see little to justify your argument, Miss Wrexham ; for as well, and with as much justice might I say, that I do not like pies, because, forsooth, I cannot make pastry."

But Rosalie paid dearly for this attempt at self-justification ; for though she met many kind glances, that almost repaid her for the worst, by speaking their satisfaction, yet lady Delaware built a long reproof upon it, concluding with the cutting observation—" You must excuse her, Miss Wrexham, for I really believe she knows no better."

A week had already passed of the party's sojournment at Westcombe—a week that had travelled to " divers persons in divers paces." Perhaps the baronet had felt the foot of Time tread the most heavy ; for with him it might truly be said—" *La plus perdue de toutes les journées est celle où l'on n'a pas ri,*" and to be a lover, and to laugh, was pronounced

pronounced incompatible. With these feelings, he heard, with regret, that “honest Jack” was about to leave them.—“The devil!” was repeated over twenty times, concluding with the as oft-repeated asseveration, that “he could not possibly consent to part with him.”

“Then you must go with me, that’s all,” said Jack, anxiously hoping he would consent to the arrangement; “the old boy my uncle will be delighted to see you, and Sib is the nicest little jockey in Christendom.”

Sir John seemed to pause over the invitation—“But my mother?” he said, arriving at the first obstacle, “and mam’selle P.? Perhaps it would be better policy to ‘woo and marry and a,’ before I lose sight of her.”

This was put in a tone of interrogation, which “honest Jack” understanding, he replied—“You know best, sir Dit. She is not one to be met with every day in the
the

the week, with all that cash, and free from spavins or mallinders.”

Sir John took the first opportunity of sounding his mother on the propriety of leaving home at the present moment. —“ I shall not be absent above a week,” he observed ; “ and there is no knowing what absence may do towards stimulating my fair intended’s affections.” There was a tone of irony in the manner in which he pronounced this—an expression that shewed him not a little dissatisfied with the present state of things ; and after a moment’s pause, he continued—“ I do not think I should have consented to the thing at all, could I but have guessed she would take such a plaguy deal of wooing.”

Lady Delaware looked for a moment perplexed ; but recovering herself, she said—“ Act, John, dear, as you please. But were you to ask my advice, I should say, stay at home, and take the first opportunity of *popping the question*.”

Sir

Sir John gave a long “ heugh,” and said—“ I know too well, mother, how the land lays to do that. I have been upon a system of *espionage* lately, and if looks and gestures are to be believed, take my word if it don’t come out that that tidy bit of goods, Miss P. has been making me play the fool all this time, without caring one rush about me.”

“ Nonsense, John! I tell you you are talking nonsense! What end could she possibly have to answer?”

Sir John was posed; but after being silent some time, he said, laughing—“ I’ll be hanged if I can think! but I’ll tell you, mother, when I come back from sir Jack Grafton’s.”

“ Then you really intend to go?”

“ Why not? ‘When how d’ye do has failed to move,’ you know, the poet says, ‘good-bye.’ What the devil does he say? ‘Good-bye.’ Pho!—what is it? However, ‘good-bye’ settles the business.”

business." Lady Delaware, however, looked unconvinced, which her son perceiving, he continued—"Trust to my sharpness, mother, and believe me, I'll bring myself through with flying colours. This day week I'll be back, and then—but I shall meet you on the course at A——; we shall have rare sport! I am confident I am the man!—pale blue jacket and scarlet sleeves!—you'll be on the look-out for me." He then was leaving the room, to give his orders for departure, when, recollecting himself, he turned round to say—"You will have room for madam Manners in the carriage?"

"Who?" asked lady Delaware, half doubting her hearing.

"Rosy," he replied. "I have promised her she shall see the races."

Rosalie, notwithstanding all her mortifying disappointments, had not yet lost sight of the age of credulity; and when
her

her cousin had told her she should see him "split it" at the races, she could not think it impossible but what lady Delaware might be prevailed upon to indulge her. Her only fear was, that sir John, in his own concerns, would lose sight of her interests; and when she heard of his intended trip with his friend John Ladbrooke, she lost the hope that had till now supported her.

Possessing a sensibility that fed upon trifles, she had begun to feel that, notwithstanding his provoking taunts and mortifying jests, there were times when she really loved her cousin. It is true, these fits were short and intermittent, excited by acts of kindness, that were as rare as fleeting; but the young heart will find something to rest upon; and in lieu of something better, Rosalie was encouraging hers to settle upon her cousin; but it was a passive sensation, rather than a tender emotion; and scarcely
ly

ly guessing at the extent of it herself, she wondered what made her so dull, and so inclined to cry, the morning he and his friend departed from Westcombe. The breakfast-table looked empty and deserted; she wondered any body could eat; and when she heard Miss Pleydell laugh and talk as usual, she envied her the temperament of mind that could enable her to pass by troubles in this world with such becoming philosophy. There is, however, no power we submit to so resignedly as necessity. Sir John was gone; to be sure, he had taken with him her hopes of being present at the races; but he was gone, and resignation to the worst soon came, and she sat down to write to her sister.

While thus employed, Miss Pleydell came, and placed herself beside her, saying —“ Copying *jeux-d'esprits*, I suppose? Pray let me benefit by them; for that aunt of yours is hobbling round the garden

den with the only man there is to speak to, and I am dying with the vapours: let me see them?" glancing over the paper as she spoke, much to the annoyance of Rosalie.

"It is a letter to my sister," she at length observed: but it had no influence over Ruth, who continued to read on, till Rosalie suddenly arrested her progress, by placing, in much agitation, both her hands upon the paper.

Ruth's countenance had changed; but she said, with as much composure as she could command—"You are too late, Miss Manners; and I have only to return you my thanks for the spirited sketch you have drawn of me to your sister." There was a smile lurked in the corners of her mouth when she spoke, which was again pursed up into seriousness, as she continued—"I have had reason to find that you are too punctilious to be *bribed*; therefore I must

ask you as a friend, will you gratify me by destroying that letter?"

"Certainly," said Rosalie, preparing to put it in practice.

"But I have yet another favour to ask," said Ruth, arresting her intention.

Rosalie's looks demanded, in some fear, what it was? and Miss Pleydell replied—"It is to be permitted to read to the end of it."

In an instant Rosalie's neck, hands, and face, were crimsoned with blushes; apprehension trembled through her frame, and with a piercing tone of entreaty, she exclaimed—"Do not ask me, Miss Pleydell—not for the world! I would rather die than consent to it!"

She had taken the worst means of prevention: Ruth's curiosity was raised to the utmost stretch; and in a manner so sudden, that Rosalie could offer no resistance, she snatched the letter from her.

her. Panic-struck, Rosalie made no effort to regain it, and Ruth Pleydell read to the end, without any interruption or comment.—“Poor Rosalie!” she exclaimed, with much kindness, as she concluded it, “poor Rosalie is then *pris* as well as myself, by the all-subduing powers of Cupid! But never mind, my dear girl, my having become acquainted with it; your secret is as safe in my keeping as my secret is in yours, perhaps *safer*,” she replied, with a look of archness, “for remember, Rosalie, that *I have no sister.*”

Rosalie could not but laugh, as she reperused the letter that Miss Pleydell had forced from her. It commenced with a statement of all the circumstances that had made her acquainted with concerns that would willingly have been kept from her. Then followed her own sapient remarks upon them, not qualified by any small share of praise, but plainly

stated, nought set down in malice, and certainly nought extenuated. But the part that vexed her the most, was that which betrayed her sentiments respecting her cousin, a confession she felt might lower her in the opinion of those to whom Ruth Pleydell might betray it.

Again she read the identical part of the letter, and tears of wounded feelings dropped upon the words, and she wished she could blot them as easily from the memory as she did from off the paper. But the line, “ I believe I am in love with cousin John,” was ever present to her mind, and she shamed to meet Ruth Pleydell more and more every time she reperused them ; but she had no chance of escaping her.—“ What a fool she must think me !” she exclaimed to herself, again reading over the letter, which, after the *confession*, continued—“ If you think he will love me some day in return, put a cross in one corner of your
answer;

answer; but *mention* not one word about the matter, for fear my aunt should get hold of the letter; and though you will not believe it, I repeat, it is the last thing in the world that will give her pleasure. Should such a thing ever happen, it will not be with her consent, and I fear she will stop at no means to prevent it; but at present there is little chance. I look a great figure always by the side of Miss Pleydell; and her ladyship had all my front hair yesterday cut so short, that to curl it is impossible, and until that grows again, which will not be for months, he might just as well fall in love with his own groom, or the ploughboy. I often wish now I had not exposed myself so to the sun, for all the ladies' skins are quite white, whilst the poll of my neck is hideous! and I know my aunt would as soon see a rope round it as a silk handkerchief. 'Such vanity!' she would say. Vanity indeed!" groan-

ed out poor Rosalie, coming, after the twentieth perusal. again to the end of her letter.

CHAPTER II.
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SIR John and his friend travelled as fast towards the uncle's of the latter, as four post-horses would carry them; and if noise is a criterion of mirth, for they had a horn each, they might be considered a merry party. It was indeed so like the jollity of times past, that their hearts and their heads seemed trying to exceed each other in lightness; besides which pleasing excitement, sir John had escaped from a service that taxed him heavily, while "honest Jack" was on the point of meeting friends who loved him sincerely.

"Put 'em along, Bill!" ever and anon

issued from one of the front glasses, and refreshed the driver's memory; and, "rain 'em along, Dick!" at the same time being vociferated through the other, it was not strange that they reached, at an early hour, the end of their journey.

Grafton Hall was finely situated on an eminence; but a single glance at it explained immediately the kind of person it belonged to, the park being cut up into paddocks for brood mares, while the regularity of the main building was destroyed by the injudicious vicinity of stables, riding-houses, court-yards, and dog-kennels. All however was kept in the greatest nicety, shewing, as the dwelling-house was not near so particular, that cleanliness was an advantage more exclusively enjoyed by the brutes, than the *bipeds* that composed the family. But it must be remembered that the house was the residence of an old bachelor, with no wife to look after the cobwebs,

cobwebs, or to arrange the domestic economy. It is true his establishment was large ; but as it consisted of eight grooms, three stable-boys, a huntsman, dog-feeder, and whipper-in, with two women only to do the work of the house, it is not to be wondered at that the latter could have been better attended to.

The owner however passed much more time in the stables than he did within its walls, never entering them after the morning, till summoned to take the lead at the large oaken table, where generally the fatigues of the day soon sent him to sleep, as soundly as the two favourite hounds and the springer that lay at his feet, and were ever his constant companions.

The ornaments of this room, and indeed all the others, were perfectly in character with the owner's predilection. Valuable portraits decorated the walls—not of the Grafton family, but of Mut-

ton-chop, Quiz, Smolensko, and Kitty, on the racers' side, and Spankaway, Cyclops, and Nettletop, on that of the hunters. The interstices of the brown wainscot were set off by single and double-barrel guns of every description, powder-flasks, shot-belts, hunting-caps, dog-whips, and fox-tails, while the ears and nose of the animal were to be seen, in equal preservation, nailed over the doors of the dog-kennel.

When the two young men arrived, sir John Grafton had gone to pay a morning visit in the neighbourhood.

"And Miss Sybella?" asked John.

"Oh," replied the groom, "madam Sib be either *farrying* a little, or else she be in her chamber."

John Ladbroke, who well knew the way, led his companion to her little sitting-room.

"Yoicks!" she exclaimed, scarcely able to contain her joy on seeing him,  
and

and sunk breathless into the arms of her cousin.

Nothing perhaps could be more distinct than the whole set-out of Miss Grafton's boudoir, if compared with the *sanctum sanctorum* of a fine lady in London; while the proprietor herself, instead of being discovered delicately prosecuting some curious stitch in needle-work, was engaged in knotting the thong of a whip, and in new grafting the handle. Her dress also was too particular not to claim some share of attention, consisting of a habit, negligently unbuttoned in front, disclosing underneath the neatly-plaited shirt and fine dimity waistcoat; the arrangement of the head was *en suite* with the rest of the figure; the hair was cut close, and a black jockey-cap that lay at her feet, proclaimed her to be the wearer.

Sir John was never tired with gazing on her. It was so strange, in this dis-

guise, that she should look even tolerable; but she did look pretty; and fearing his scrutiny might distress her, he turned to examine the apartment.—“That is a picture of my uncle, sir,” she said, alluding to the one the baronet was observing; “he is standing by his favourite jockey,” she continued. “It is a pity he ever grew too old to ride himself; for when young he was a noted rider, and his head has been as often crowned with laurels, as that of any man, gentleman born, in England.”

Sir John turned from the portrait of sir *Dit* Grafton, to a large landscape, presenting a view of the Yorkshire Wolds, that hung over the chimney-piece; the foreground crowded with sportsmen, in eager pursuit of a pack of hounds, that seemed flying down the steep, as though they had invisible wings to assist them.

“That, perhaps,” she said, “is not interesting

teresting to any one, who was not, like myself, an eye-witness to it ; it is drawn from memory, a long while ago, as you may guess, when I tell you that little imp on horseback," pointing to a figure the baronet had before overlooked, " was my exact resemblance."

Taken in the light of a sketch, though richly daubed with oil paints, the piece possessed some merits ; and sir John was praising it with all his might and main, when, suddenly turning upon him, she said—" Come, sir, no fiddle—no bam ! if you must be gallant, here is something worth expending your words upon," drawing out some sketches from a drawer, and quietly laying them before the baronet.

The specimens she now exhibited were portraits of favourite pointers, done in an exquisite style, with their names written over them—such as Fly, Match'em, Restless, and Speed-to-go.—" And there  
is



is poor Firebrand !” she said, tears rising to her eyes as she shewed the sketch of him she had taken as he lay dead—“ Poor Firebrand ! as Prince Henry says of Falstaff, ‘ I could have better spared a better man.’ ”

The meeting of the uncle with his nephew was consistent with the warm affection he bore him.—“ Well, this is kind,” he said over a dozen times—“ leaving a gay party to come and visit an old spavined uncle ! How did you travel—on horseback ? with a spare shirt in one pocket—not forgetting, I hope, a pair of thin racing-boots in the other ? ”

Sir John Grafton could talk of little else indeed but the expected races. Sybella and himself had both horses to run ; and he made John promise to be his jockey. This was not the first time the cousins had met, since the kind letter Sybella had sent to Cambridge, containing the money ; yet there was a constraint

straint in John's manner towards her, that led the baronet to conceive he still felt pained at the obligation he was under—an obligation he had not yet in his power to cancel. It was so evident something was wrong, that the first opportunity, sir John taxed his friend with it—concluding with the encouraging observation—“Damn it, Jack! do not be cast down! I am sorry I have not the stuff to lend you; but a successful heat, you know, will completely fresh line your pockets: besides, if I mistake not, it is soon all to be one concern.” He looked inquisitively. “No longer *Miss Grafton*, but ‘Ladbroke and Company.’ Oh, Jack, do not be such a hypocrite!”

“You are right, sir Dit,” said his friend, with some solemnity: “Sib and I are some day to make a match of it in right earnest, and it is that fevers me.”

“But you love her?”

“Doat

“ Doat on her.”

“ Then where is your objection ?”

“ Do not ask me, sir Dit: the fact is, she is not what I look for in a wife: the elegance of the female is compromised for the knowingness of the jockey: conversation, instead of comprising the fascinating charm that is imparted by female lips, consists in a discussion of the merits and demerits of foals and yearlings. Besides, she must be totally devoid of all female accomplishments, as the *Racing Calendar* and the *Sporting Magazine* are her only study.”

A contemptuous frown had gathered on his brow as he concluded, and he was proceeding, in no very gentle tone, to deal out his objections, when Sybella herself, taking a spring in at the window, stood before them.—“ What is the matter, Jack ?” she asked, looking kindly at him; “ you are come home soon from your ride—not broken the knees of my mare, have you ?”

“ Your

“Your heart is always with your horses, Sib,” said her cousin; “I wish you would take to some elegant notions, and have nothing to do with them but in a carriage.”

She stared at him for a moment, and then laughing, replied.—“Lord, what fun! why, I would as readily employ a sedan chair as a carriage.” The idea was to her so farcical that she could not readily forget it. “Think of me in a carriage!” she repeated, once or twice; then suddenly becoming serious, she continued, “but it would not be *you*, John, if you had not some change to wish in me. Why don’t you do this?—why don’t you do that?” mimicking him. “I believe you want to make me quite a *molly-coddle*.” She pouted her lip as she turned from him; then softening, she added, “but I would even be a molly-coddle, John, to please you.”

Sir John Delaware was amused by  
her

her originality; and to continue the scene, he asked her, what were the last invented fancy stitches?

“ I do not know,” she replied, and a deep blush mounted to her cheeks; then archly glancing towards her cousin, she said, timidly—“ John, I have learnt how to work.”

“ Have you?” he said, looking quite pleased—“ have you indeed, dear Sib? but shew me some of your performance, that I may be able to believe you.”

She threw up the window sash, and called—“ Tom.”

“ Defer your orders to Tom, Sib,” said her cousin; “ I want to see your performance.”

Without however attending to him, again “ Tom” was vociferated. He ran a few steps from the stable.—“ Tom, I say, bring me that saddle-cloth that Betty shewed me how to fashion the galloon on.”

“ And

“And is that all you can do?” said John Ladbroke, turning from her, and betraying disappointment in his tone and manner—“Is that all you can do, Sib?”

She answered him with seriousness—“No, John, that is *not* all I can do: I can crop, trim, and nick your horses—cure fever, glanders, bots, and mallinders: then for your dogs, I can break in the young ones, and bleed and physic them—mend your saddles and bridles, put new lashes to old whips, and make the best stuff in the world for cleaning boot-tops, and for blacking them.” She paused.

“And what else can you do?” asked John, in something of a sarcastic tone.

With much agility she again cleared the window; then looking in, replied, with a playful manner—“Keep out of your way, John, till you are in a better humour—that is what I can do, John;”  
and

and bounding off, they watched her turn into a court-yard that led to the stables.

CHAPTER III.  
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THE race-ground was about half way between Grafton Hall and Westcombe, and the principal stand was filled, at an early hour with all the youth and beauty in the county.

Sir John Delaware was in his glory ; he was chosen steward for the ball ; and what was better, he was engaged in the bye-match, where every proprietor was to be his own jockey.

Ruth Pleydell expressed more than ordinary delight at seeing him ; complimented him on the taste of his jacket, and exhausted on him all her good wishes that he might come off the victor.

Valentine



Valentine Ladbroke acted joint steward with the baronet; but he appeared wholly insensible of the gaiety of the scene around him, or of the charms of the young beauties that embellished it; and on joining the party from Westcombe, notwithstanding Miss Wrexham was leaning on his arm, his first question was—"Where is Miss Manners?"

But poor Rosalie Manners was far from the busy scene—left at home to pine and weep in solitude—to wonder what sort of a thing a race-course was, and to resolve on not fixing her wishes on any thing in future, that at least she might escape the pang of disappointment. Perhaps had she known that her cousin had a moment to spare to regret her absence, and that Valentine had inquired after her, she might have had some gratification of feeling to console her. But, as it was, she had nothing—nothing but the liberty of walking in  
the

the park when she liked, and of continuing, free from interruption, her studies.

But to return to the party on the race-ground. The meeting was a crowded one; each equipage seemed endeavouring to rival the other in splendour—the ladies to outvie each other in elegance—and who should be the most gallant upon the occasion, seemed the ambition of the gentlemen. The *connoisseurs* affirmed the sport to be excellent, and the ball was expected to be the gayest thing ever known, and promised to crown the whole with felicity.

Nothing could be more interested than the ladies were in every race. Gloves were lost and won by the young, and pots of coffee by the old. The ladies' plate was decided upon; then the sweepstakes; and then came on the one that excited a still more lively interest in their minds, especially among the ladies; for instead of selecting the favourite  
ite

ite horse, it was now, who should name their favourite jockey.

Ten gentlemen *amateurs* were to start—all residents or visitors in the neighbourhood, and most of them well known to the spectators. Nothing could be more busy than sir John Grafton; he was here, there, and everywhere, deploring over and over again, to every one, the fit of illness that had deprived Sib the treat of being present at such gay doings: then he would fly over the course—then back again to his friends in the stand, to inform them, that now they were saddling—now mounting (the bell rung)—and now in the act of starting!—"Oh that I was but a colt, that I might ride myself!" he exclaimed, as his eyes anxiously followed them; then spurring his horse, he was in a moment amidst the thickest of the throng, riding after them.

The first heat was easily won by the  
baronet,

baronet, "honest Jack," who rode his uncle's horse, trying hard for the victory, but without being able to reach him; and the rest merely saved their distance.

At the commencement of the second heat, the odds were in the baronet's favour, and continued so for some time, till Jack, who had previously come in second, appeared gaining so fast upon him, that the general opinion was beginning to change, when, just before they came to the stand, a strange young man's horse, giving a sudden and surprising spring in answer to the whip, flew past them both, and snatched the wreath of laurel from them.

Much money was lost upon the heat, and much more was betted on the remaining one; the odds being something in favour of the man who had so unexpectedly surpassed them.

The anxiety of the young ladies, relative to the riders, seemed to spread

throughout the stand; and the young man who had last won, acquired a value, in their estimation, for the neatness with which he had gained his distinction.

Sir John Grafton clapped his hands in ecstasy.—“Never mind, Jack!” he said, “better luck next time.”

At length the bell rang, announcing the third heat, and every eye was strained towards the equestrian candidates; all of them fine figures and neat riders, and all gaily dressed, except the stranger, who was plainly attired in a white satin jacket and white velvet cap. They had an equal start, and for half-way round, all kept close together, when sir John Grafton’s mare shyed at a post, and by an unlucky chance unhorsed poor John the rider. The stranger’s horse leaped over him as he lay on the course, which impeding in a degree its velocity, sir John Delaware’s mare got the start, and  
the

the odds were again in his favour. The interest excited was great—sir John was gaining ground, when the stranger, recovering his horse's speed, set off at score, turning the corners so neatly, riding so steadily, and laying so true to the inside of the course, that the ground he had lost was soon recovered. To see him, was to witness the swiftness of the arrow. Here, a quarter of a mile from the winning-post, he overtook the baronet, then the forwardest of his antagonists; and the shouts of the populace rent the air, when his horse shot a neck's length beyond the baronet's, and the race without hesitation was decided in favour of the stranger.

This was the end of the day's sport. The company left the stand to prepare for dinner; all most wonderfully interested in the delightful young man who had been so gloriously successful. Nobody knew who he was, yet every body

was making inquiries concerning him; and though sir John Grafton was observed to make many significant winks with the eye, and nods of the head, yet no one could gain any intelligence respecting him.

“ You seem down in the mouth, Jack,” said the baronet, observing an unusual abstraction in the manner of his friend; “ what is the matter? cannot you forget our defeat in the morning?” Then replying to his own reflections, he added—“ Damn the fellow! I wish he had been further: he is some *leg* or another, depend on it; for, no doubt, the name entered was a feigned one.”

“ It was,” said Jack, biting his lips, and betraying visibly his vexation.

“ Then you know him?” asked his friend.

“ I do.”

“ Mighty concise!” returned the baronet; “ if it is no secret, perhaps you will

will enable me to know him also : what is his name ?”

“ You know it already,” replied his friend.

“ To my cost, you mean.”

“ *Your* cost ?” said John ; “ a feather in the scale, of comparison with mine !”

“ Why, your fall, to be sure, was rather unlucky ; but I told you there was no confidence to be placed in that gig of your uncle’s : your fall, to be sure, *was* rather unlucky !”

“ Pshaw !” returned John, with impatience.

“ You are testy, Jack,” observed the baronet.

“ Rather say—wounded to the quick,” replied his friend, with a bitter expression of sorrow ; then recovering himself, he added, “ but this shall cancel the obligation—I’ll tell my uncle so : I’ll give her up, whatever may be the result ; I’ll——”



"Softly, softly, Jack," said the baronet; "you grow warm: reflect a little. What has all this to do with my question? if you remember, I asked you only if you knew the stranger?"

"I do," said Jack, in a tremulous voice, that shewed he was calming down his rage as well as he could; "it was *my wife*, that is to be!" He said this with sarcastic bitterness; then continued, ironically; "it was *Miss Sybella*, alias *Jack Grafton*."

There was a languid elegance in Ruth Pleydell, the morning after the race-ball, that acquired her much interest in the eyes of the baronet. The dazzling brilliancy of her usual manner was gone, and had given place to a softened air, which, while it left her less amusing, perhaps took not away one atom from her attraction. The baronet, at least, felt much more at home with her; it seemed a humour conjured up on purpose

pose to draw from him his tender tale. The same idea, he was sure, struck his mother. She took Rosalie's arm, and left the apartment; and profiting by her absence, he sidled across the room, and sat down on the same sofa with Ruth Pleydell. Their conference was long, and, on the baronet's part, unusually animated. He was, by turns, tender, persuasive, and pathetic: he talked of loving her with a love never felt before—to please, her was to be his constant aim—she was to be the friend of his heart—she was to be the wife of his bosom.

It was now time for Ruth to speak. She thanked him for the compliment he paid her, the recollection of which was only to be lost sight of with her life. After such, it was but right that she in her turn should be explicit. She had no affections to offer him; they were not her own to bestow.

The baronet could not credit this, and she was obliged several times to repeat it. Perhaps he did not look so sorrowful as might have been expected; but there was an expression of mortified vanity instead, and he muttered the sentences—"great pain—great expectation—great hope;" and it finished with, that he was "a great ass," not to have followed his own persuasions.

Miss Fleydell rose, to finish the interview; and the baronet, biting his lips, followed her example.—"Perhaps," he said, "the question I am about to ask, you may not only refuse to answer, but may pronounce to be unnecessary; and yet I will venture it. Who, ma'am, is the happy devil for whom I am rejected?"

Ruth had her hand on the lock of the door; but she rested a moment, then replied—"I can have no reason to keep secret what will soon be known to all  
the

the world. In a month my marriage will take place with colonel Clayton."

"The devil!" exclaimed the baronet, as she departed.

"What!" said lady Delaware, appearing through an opposite door, "who did she say she was engaged to?"

But the baronet only again groaned forth—"The devil!"

CHAPTER IV.  
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It was long before lady Delaware could give full credence to the tale her son told her; and yet the veil once drawn aside, things were accounted for, that left little requisite to further substantiate the story.

Ruth Pleydell had been playing the hypocrite, was very certain; and had been making them both subservient to her own schemes, while giving them reason to believe that her happiness only centered in giving in to theirs.—“As for the colonel, he is a deceitful viper!” exclaimed her ladyship—“a snake in the grass! a beetle under a stone!”

Her

Her son could not see any thing so very much to tell against him. In love, and in war, every cheating was fair : he had only done what he should have had no scruple of doing under the same circumstances : he had consented to take a beauty off her last legs, who was most ready to run away with any body who would have her.

The latter assertion was a sort of salvo to his own vanity : indeed, he had almost persuaded himself he never had one serious intention concerning her ; and possessing little anger on the subject, he wondered to see his mother take it so deadly to heart, and shew herself so splenetic on the occasion. Little suspecting her views upon the colonel, and the artful means the colonel had taken to encourage without establishing them, he could not see her anger with any sort of patience.—“ Damn it, mother !” he said, “ better shew them we do not

mind it—not indeed that I do care much. It is true, the play is spoilt; but let us go to town, and we can get a much cheaper one at Covent-garden. Ten chances to one, Jack and I had never got through the first scene of it: he always said he should laugh; and when he begins, you know there is no resisting him.”

“ Ay—that play,” interrupted lady Delaware, apparently only speaking her thoughts aloud—“ that play was the first thing that made me suspect the colonel’s attachment.”

“ *Attachment!*” repeated the baronet, in an ironical tone, not understanding her ladyship’s meaning; “ *attachment* indeed! take away the noughts out of her rent-roll, and then see how stands the sum total of his *attachment!*”

Lady Delaware, although it would have pleased her better if she had, could not see the thing in the same light.

No—

No—Ruth, while apparently occupied in another concern, had spared no pains to seduce his affections.—“ I see it all !” she continued—“ see, when too late, all her deep-lain schemes and machinations : there were many things I could not understand at the time, that now are as clear to me as the sun at noonday. I never liked either, his hearing her so often her part ; and if you remember, I once hinted to you, that you had much better save him the trouble.”

“ Ah, ah, ah !” burst forth her son, in a laugh as distinct from mirth as possible—“ ah, ah, ah ! catch me teaching the young ideas how to shoot ! better be dubbed at once the village schoolmaster ! b-a—ba ; b-e—devil !”

Lady Delaware could not be persuaded by her son to make light of the occasion : nothing should again tempt her into the same room with Ruth ; and as to the colonel, he was so thoroughly contemptible

contemptible in her eyes, that she dared not trust herself to look at him : and to his request, sent by the servant, to know if he could do any thing for her in town, she sent back only the concise reply of—" Nothing."

Ruth Pleydell, anticipating there would come a time when the Hall would be too hot to hold her, had laid her plans for the occasion. Her own chariot was sent from London to the nearest post-town, where it remained till summoned by her; and in two hours after the disclosure of her plans, she stepped into it, and took the road to London.

This finished the schemes of her ladyship. She saw her son's expectations blighted—and blighted by the man who was to have constituted her own felicity. Mortified and vexed, she shunned all society for a time, keeping to her own room, where she did nothing but take
advantage

advantage of the quiet, to bathe her ankle with oppodeldoc, and vent bitter execrations on the colonel.

The baronet, was not so bereft of every consolation; he could still look with a steady eye through a long perspective of distant pleasures, and build on other heiresses, who might better suit his purpose; and for the present managed to make out his time pretty well, between tormenting his cousin, and flirting with the nabob's daughter, Miss Wrexham.

"What will you give me, John," Rosalie asked one morning, as they sat alone—"what will you give me if I tell you a secret?"

"What I am seldom in the habit of bestowing," he returned—"my attention."

Thus did he always blight her best energies; and Rosalie, without endeavouring to conceal her displeasure, turned abruptly from him.

"Well,

“Well, let us have it,” he said. “What is it?”

“I shall not tell you.”

“It is a pity all your *manners*, Miss Rosalie, are confined to your name: you are a greater *humguffin* than ever!”

It was hard for Rosalie, while feeling so much inclination towards her cousin, that he should do so little to shew her off in her best colours. He was instead, ever exciting her to anger; and the schemes she had laid to ensure his heart were sure to give way before it. Besides this, she had yet another obstacle to deal with, and this was, her innate shyness and timidity; not a timidity like that of which we read, that helps to set off young lady heroines to advantage, but a shyness that distorted her form, and interfered with the harmony of her countenance.

It was vain for her, whilst labouring under this malady, and it was a drawback

back she was fully aware of, to imitate the ease and grace of Miss Pleydell.—“ I always blush so when he speaks to me,” she wrote to her sister ; “ and this shyness,” she continued, “ so alters the tone of my voice, that I become as hoarse as a raven when I speak to him ; whilst, to mend all, he is saying, every hour in the day, how much he admires *collectedness*.”

She saw, or fancied she saw, all the points he admired in Ruth Pleydell ; and her object was to become a close copyist. With this, she eat with her fork only at dinner, longed to ride on horseback, and said all the sharp things she could when addressed by strangers. But no saying is so true as that—“ One man may steal a horse, whilst another may not look over the hedge.” Rosalie’s little endeavours met with no success : lady Delaware never let the opportunity pass of turning them into traps to
make

make her look foolish, whilst her cousin quizzed her upon them more unmercifully than ever; and she was about, on her own accord, to give up the system of *nonchalance* as a bad job, when a letter came from her sister and fully occupied her. It related the death of their mother.—“A happy death,” Maria observed, “for she left her dear children, as she always called us, well taken care of. Her money, she says, will now come to us—fifty pounds a-year a-piece. I think we might live together; but it was her last wish that you would continue with our aunt, and I was to go immediately to Mrs. Ladbroke’s. I should like it had been otherwise; but her will, not ours, be done.”

Rosalie moped up in her chamber for a month: nobody came near her but the servants, who expressed themselves sorry Miss Rosalie should take on so; whilst her cousin occasionally enlivened her

her

her by a “yoicks! tally-ho!” under her window, which, as it brought the colour to her face in replying to him, satisfied him she was in good condition, and only a little *dumpish* on the occasion. When she, however, at her aunt’s peremptory request, came down stairs, her appearance undeceived him: she was become much thinner, and so pale, that lady Delaware was even induced to shew her some consideration and kindness.—“What is the matter, Rosalie?” her cousin asked her, the first moment they were left together, and as though nothing in the world had happened; “you have lost all your roses; what has become of them?”

“They all withered when my father died.” She remembered Ruth Pleydell’s saying this one day when she was acting; and since it had been applicable to herself, it had been ever in her memory.—“They all withered when my mother died,”

died," she softly said to her cousin—then stopped; indeed, a heavy sigh impeded her utterance; her heart seemed too big; but she knew she was like a mouse in the hands of a cat, and she checked her perturbation.

"Your mother! what, Rosy?"

"Oh, nonsense! I have forgotten."

He looked at her with something of a softened expression, and his smile of derision emanated into one of better feeling, as he said—"Though you have lost a mother, Rosalie, you will soon find another. We must look out a husband for you, and then his mother will be yours, you know."

"Stuff, John!"

"What!" he asked, "have you no desire to marry, and have a house of your own? Would you rather live on in the capacity of *leg extraordinary* to my mother? You must like her better than I do then; for I can tell you, I mean

mean to alter my condition soon, if it is only to get out of the sphere of her dominion."

"I should have thought your disappointment in regard to Miss Pleydell," observed Rosalie, coolly, "would for a time have satisfied you. That was a bad business," she continued, rather maliciously; "I was sorry to see you taken in so; and if I could have got you to listen to me, so would have told you."

"What, after it was all over!" he said with a sneer; "that is locking the stable-door when the steed is stolen. What a fool you are, Rosalie! told me indeed! why *then* I could have told you."

"You misunderstand me, John, as you always delight to do," said Rosalie; "I could have told you Miss Pleydell was misleading you, a week after we came to the country."

Sir John stared.—"How?" he asked—"from what did you suspect it?"

"It

"It was beyond suspicion," replied Rosalie; "it was in that window I sat one morning," pointing to its recess at the end of the apartment, "and the colonel and Miss Pleydell met, without the knowledge that any one was near them."

"And what did they do?" asked sir John, rubbing his hands, with the seeming delight that he was about to hear a good story.

"They did nothing," Rosalie replied; "that is, they only shook hands; it was what they *said* that betrayed so much to me."

"And what did they say?" he asked inquisitively.

"It was too disrespectful for me to repeat."

"Never mind—let's have it."

It was now vain to hold back, and she recounted to him the whole of the conversation. He bit his lips, rubbed up his hair, walked the room, and
shewed

shewed every sign of irritation as she continued.—“Me a fool, and the old lady a knave!” he repeated, as she concluded, this seeming to hurt him more than any thing. “Very guestlike proceeding, I must say! but are you sure she did not call *me* the *knave*?” he asked, with a wish that it might be so. “Recollect, Rosy, it was *I* was the knave, and the old lady the fool.”

But Rosalie could not make him easier by changing the appellation; and with a groan of vexation, he asked if she had any thing else to tell him?

“Yes,” she replied; “it seemed that I was always to detect them: I saw them one morning meet very early in the garden.”

“At what hour?”

“Long before you were up, John,” replied Rosalie, scarcely able to resist a smile.

“How do you know?”

“Because

“ Because I saw Ruth point to your window, with the blind down, before she ventured to run over the lawn from the shrubbery, where she left the colonel.”

“ And you saw all this ?”

“ I did, and more.” Rosalie blushed.

“ What more ?”

“ I saw him kiss her.” Here she looked ashamed.

“ Where ?” asked her cousin.

“ Oh, John !” she said, “ where were your eyes ?—You were as near to them as I was.”

“ Where ?—when was it ?”

“ One day when you took us into the stable to look at your favourite racer.”

“ That might be,” he said, seeming most satisfactorily to account for his blindness, “ that might be ; for, I must say, I had not many eyes for any body, at that time, but Vestal.”

Lady Delaware, although deeply
wounded

wounded in spirit by her late mortifying disappointment, yet so far managed to soften her asperity, that Rosalie received much better treatment from her than was usual with her. One thing had indeed made her look on her niece with a less evil eye, and that was the removal of the dread she had always experienced, that the taking care of her would subject her, on a future day, to the increased burden of providing for her sister. As things had turned out, she began, in secret, to look upon Rosalie in the light rather of an advantage than an encumbrance. She was lost without her support by her side; and as she had now fifty pounds a-year of her own, she had no apprehension of being brought to the necessity of squandering her own money on the clothing of her.

Indeed, excepting the grief that laid heavy at her heart for the loss of her mother, Rosalie's lot had brightened;

she was now, in a degree, independent; and she felt a pride, blended with her sorrow, as she put on her new mourning, that *her own money* had bought her.

Her cousin, either from the compassion her dejection inspired, or the improvement of her outward appearance, paid her some gratifying attention; and though any great intercourse together was sure to end in a quarrel, yet he in their best humours betrayed those sort of feelings towards her, which his bad tempers could not obliterate; and she yet hoped "to drive liking to the name of love," when he unexpectedly made known his intention of visiting the Continent.

"John, dear, what new vagary is this?" asked his mother—"why, we are going to London!"

"Are we?" he said, in a slang tone.
"What, at every corner of the street to
run

run against madame Ruth, and that neat lad, the colonel? No mother," he continued, in a decided tone, "I left London under different expectations to what I should return to it. I know, therefore, the laugh would be against me; so, to spare my friends the trouble of exerting their risible faculties, I turn my back upon them. This, however, has long been a favourite scheme of mine; and next week sees me start upon my travels."

"For how long?" asked his mother, knowing it was no use to offer any objections.

"As long as the fun pleases me," he replied. "You will be an old woman quite, I dare say, when I come back, and little Rosy will have a husband and ten small children."

Little Rosy, as he called her, turned sharp round to hide her emotion.

"Shall you be sorry to part with me,

Rose?" he asked, in something like a sentimental tone.

Her throat was dry with agitation, and she replied, in the monosyllable "Yes," in a husky voice, that would not have disgraced a boatman.

The week soon passed that sir John was to remain in England, yet much was performed in it; and at the end, nothing was left to be done but to take leave of his mother and cousin. The last moment at length came; the carriage was at the door, and lady Delaware embraced her son with all the affection she felt for him.

"Good-bye, Rose!" he said, turning round to her; but Rose had flown, overwhelmed with tears, to hide them in her chamber, from whence she saw him get into the chaise, and drive from the door, without casting one look towards her window.

CHAPTER V.
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MARIA Manners felt not the extent of her desolation, till quietly seated by the fire with Jenny, in the little sitting-room of the parsonage, on the evening of that day which had seen her mother's remains consigned to their last home in the morning. It is true that she had suffered more keenly; but in keen suffering there is an excitation that takes the mind out of itself; and while bestowing her unremitted attention on her mother, every feeling but that of solicitude was lost sight of. But now, all was silent—all was done: she had performed her last duties, and nothing was



left but to weep over their recollection.

The mistress and the maid, levelled as much by fellow-suffering as by their long knowledge of each other, sat silent, opposite each other—Jenny occasionally occupying herself by snuffing the candles, and stirring the fire; while Maria sat listless, and totally subdued by the deep grief that oppressed her. Sometimes, however, sobs would burst from her; and at length her head sunk on her companion's shoulder, and she exclaimed—"Oh, Jenny! I do think my poor heart is breaking!"

"How does it feel, Miss Mirry?" Jenny asked, looking frightened, and taking it in its literal sense. "Dame Staples broke her heart, they said, when her husband died; but her's took a good deal of time to do it in."

"I think I never felt such a sorrow before," again said Maria, wiping off a cold perspiration that hung upon her forehead;

forehead; "such a sick sorrow, Jenny. Was dame Staples's a sick sorrow?" Here her head again fell, and she sunk fainting on her servant's shoulder.

Jenny rubbed her young mistress's hands, and her temples; and soothing her with all the expressions of comfort she could think of, was soon rewarded by seeing her look up again.—"How troublesome I am, dear Jenny!" she said, trying to exert herself, as she remarked on the number of bottles and things Jenny had collected round her—"but it is for the last time, Jenny; to-morrow all will be gone, but dear Pincher, when I part from you, Jenny."

Jenny's tears were now as little to be controlled as those of her mistress's, which fell fast on Pincher, dear, as she bent down to caress him. It was indeed a gloomy prospect for the morrow: to leave the parsonage, to part with Jenny, and to go among strangers, with

nothing but Pincher to protect her. Her mind turned from it with dread, and she almost wished again for the *sick sorrow* to come, that she might die and escape it. But a cheerful sunshining morning imparted to her better feelings on the occasion: she set about fulfilling her mother's last orders, gave directions to Jenny in the arrangement of the house, paid what bills were owing, and then sat down to wait the arrival of Mrs. Ladbrooke's carriage.

It was then the whole force of her grief again returned upon her, which had for a time been lulled by her domestic occupation.—“ Oh, Jenny, dear!” she said, clinging to her round the neck, “ if mamma had not told me to do so, I do not think that I could leave you! But, Jenny, come often and see me, and get a place near me; and take care of yourself, Jenny; and do not work too hard, Jenny; and mind your poor strained wrist,

wrist, Jenny; and, Jenny, have you quite forgiven me for just tapping you on the back, as I did a long while ago, you know? "It was only a **tap**, Jenny: do you recollect? it was when you took the old pipe-bowl, and the soap-suds from me."

All this was uttered in broken and disjointed words, for her tears often impeded her progress. Jenny was equally overtaken with sorrow.—"Oh, Miss Mirry! Miss Mirry!" she exclaimed, "this is a sore day! I cannot like to think of it: but what must be, must be: and we must learn to bear it."

Jenny's philosophy was not passed unheeded: Maria repeated it to herself, and it taught her, that in such a case as hers, nothing was to be done but to submit: and when Mrs. Ladbroke's carriage came at the appointed time, she was endowed with firmness, by again repeating, as Pincher and herself turned

their backs upon all—"What must be, must be; and we must learn to bear it."

Every thing was so strange to Maria at the castle, that it interfered much with the indulgence of her sorrow: it was a new world she had entered on, and made her sometimes think all a dream, and that she should awake again, and find herself at home with her own dear mother. But it was soon given her to be understood, that she was had into the rector's establishment as much for their advantage as for her own; and without any apologies or delay, the housekeeper, the day after her arrival, explained to her the nature of the services required of her: these were, to attend entirely to the household and family linen; to pick the flowers that decorated the sitting-rooms; to read to Mrs. Ladbroke when she required it; to hold herself in readiness to make tea  
in

in the drawing-room; and to cut out and stick paper ornaments together, under Mrs. Ladbrooke's directions.

All this promised no endurance of hardship. She had a little room assigned over to her, for her sole use, where she thought she should be much happier than if for ever subject to the heads of the family's pomposity and dulness.

Maria had entered her new abode, without drawing out for herself any rule of conduct—ignorant of the place she was to fill, and in what rank she was to be considered by its inhabitants; that is, whether she was to be looked on in the light of a servant, or treated as one of the family: she entered it without thinking any thing of this—without saying to herself what she would do, or what she would not do—without feeling degraded by her assimilation with the servants, or gratified by associating with her equals. True to the life of unso-

phisticated nature she had led, she thought not of herself; it was a creature that never interested her; arising perhaps from the confinement of her literary rescarches, which had never shewn her herself *on paper*. Unlike her sister, she had never perused a work of imagination; and therefore guessed not, that a life of trial is a life of promise and picturesque pride to the proprietor. Her ignorance of the world, and all its forms of *etiquette*, neither made her uneasy, or constrained her: she knew not what it was to be otherwise than herself; unembarrassed—saying what she had to say with collected firmness, and when she had done, remaining silent, without the apprehension of being suspected of stupidity or ignorance.

It has been observed, that extensive, superficial, and indiscriminate reading, such as an easy access to books produces, is neither favourable to solid thinking,  
true

true taste, or fixed principle. Maria had read nothing—that is, comparatively speaking; but she knew history, geography, and theology; and whatever she did know, she knew to the bottom—knowledge, as much suggested by the easy and instructive conversations she had led her mother into, as gleaned from the fruits of study.

Totally different from her sister, she had derived her all from natural objects—objects that had led her mind to trace effects to their causes. The other saw nature in poetry and novels, and never looked for it under any other circumstances. Rosalie thought so much about it, that she never entered a room without some violence to decorum or the graces. Maria, to whom *display* was unknown, never moved without elegance. Ignorant of the refinements of politeness, all she did was characteristic of her simplicity and innocence; and  
while



while her manners were perfectly free from timidity, 'they were nevertheless sweetly blended with modesty.

This was the creature whom "the squire," as he was termed by all, had set his heart on. He had seen her by accident; and when he heard his mother's intention of receiving her into the family, he thought the Fates had conspired to be of service to him. It was this arrangement that had restrained him from introducing himself to her; for his father and mother to suspect the thing, he knew was to mar his prospects; therefore, swearing his brothers to secrecy, whom he had prematurely informed of his passion, he allowed Maria to receive his parents' protection, without guessing how soon she might lay a legitimate claim to it.

He was, as though by accident, in his mother's sitting-room, when Maria received Mrs. Ladbroke's commands, the morning

morning after her arrival at the castle, to come into her presence. There was a little flutter at her heart, as the old housekeeper delivered the message; and suspecting its cause, she said—"Pray, ma'am, is Mrs. Ladbrooke as cross as she looks to be? or is she, do you think, kind and good-tempered?"

The housekeeper smiled, as she replied—"I do not think it is for me to say any thing about my mistress; but if you are dutiful, my dear, I do not doubt but she will comport herself agreeably to you."

Maria was not so much interested in the question she had asked, as to give much attention to the old lady's reply to it; for she was smoothing down her hair without the benefit of a glass, and thinking, whether or no her eyes would betray that she had been weeping. The housekeeper then led the way to the sitting-room; and pointing to the door with

with one hand, as she gave her an encouraging pat on the shoulder with the other, she went her way and left her.

Maria, without hesitation, opened it—entered, and closing it after her, was in the presence of “the squire” and Mrs Ladbroke. Mrs. Ladbroke raised her eyes from her work to receive her; but “the squire” continued intently to peruse his book, after, and what was apparently an effort, pushing a chair, with a distant shew of politeness, near her.—“Sit down, child,” Mrs. Ladbroke began, long after Maria, who knew not that there was a question as to its propriety, was seated. “That is right—sit down, child—Maria, I think your mother called you?”

Maria bowed.

“Your mother, I hear, child,” again proceeded Mrs. Ladbroke, “went off very easily: she must have had a great deal of anxiety removed by knowing  
you

you were so well provided for; I hope she tutored you to be grateful?"

Again Maria's head underwent a slight inclination.

"What age was your mother?"

There was a short pause; for Mrs. Ladbroke, who was pursuing her work, interrupted it not, from supposing the question required consideration.—"She was," Maria at length began, in a voice steadied by effort—"she was one-and-forty."

"One-and-forty!" repeated Mrs. Ladbroke; "she looked older. Are you sure you are not mistaken?"

"Sure," replied Maria. "It was but a short word to say, but it was uttered with a broken voice, and the half-choked utterance interfered with the pronunciation."

"What?" asked Mrs. Ladbroke—"speak louder, child; what did you say?"

"She

“ She is *sure*, ma’am,” said the squire, moving himself impatiently in his chair — “ she says she is sure, ma’am.”

“ I should not have thought it !” again began Mrs. Ladbroke; “ forty-one is no age ! Do not you think your mother looked older ?”

Maria, thus called upon, saw for a moment her mother’s face before her : but no sigh burst from her ; she only turned away, and resting her arms on the back of her chair, concealed her face on them.

Mrs. Ladbroke allowed her a little time to recover herself ; and the squire ventured, in the way of a hint, to ask, whether his mother had not some business to talk about — “ Some sewing, or something ?” and casting an anxious glance towards Maria, unseen by Mrs. Ladbroke, he set about the perusal of his book again.

Maria, in a few moments, raised her  
head ;

head; and the squire again ventured a stolen glance towards her. He involuntarily started, as though struck by her melancholy air and countenance: her hand now supported the back part of her head, her elbow still resting on the chair; her eyes fixed; but the little contraction of the brow betrayed that it was hard to continue this silent endurance of her sorrow. Mr. Ladbroke, in spite of his better judgment, rose; his mother looked up, and he hesitated.

“There it is, Gerald,” she said, pointing to a smelling-bottle on the table. He took it, and opening it, placed it, keeping his back towards his mother, tenderly in the hands of Maria.

“Thank you, sir,” she said, gently declining it; “*that* will do me no good.”

He looked at her with an expression of commiseration as he received it back, and she gave him a smile of gratitude—a smile so sorrowful, yet so sweet, that  
the

the squire, thinking it safer, immediately quitted the apartment.

Maria so far controlled her feelings, that Mrs. Ladbroke, before they parted, had given her all her credentials; and she retired to her own little room, to talk to Pincher, to indulge her tears, and to diligently commence her duties.

CHAPTER IV.  
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MARIA was not long a resident at the castle, before she perfectly understood, and gave every satisfaction in the office assigned her. She performed every thing with readiness and dexterity, rigidly adhering to the line of conduct marked out for her, without one complaint or one remark upon the arduousness of her situation. Occupation, she found, rendered her heart more at ease, and her cares lighter: time spent in idleness, was sure to send her thoughts straying to times past: she had no one to compassionate her griefs, therefore, instead of being nursed into a regular disease, they
were

were dismissed as an unprofitable burden. She sat down, contented with her lot, knowing that she had lost much; and attributing any little dissatisfaction, rather to the account of what was gone, than to that she was enduring at present. Laying no claim to consideration, it was unconsciously awarded to her, and she was respected and looked up to by her inferiors, even while her neck bore the same yoke with them.

Mrs. Ladbrooke was not proof against this silent claim, that Maria possessed, to consideration. It was not pride; for in no one thing could it be traced home to her: yet there was something in her air—her countenance—nay, in the steady tone of her voice, that stamped a superiority unclaimed, yet felt by all who approached her. It was impossible to set such a person as this to dine with the housekeeper; and though it had been the previous arrangement, Maria found,

found, when bidden to the repast, that a cover was placed for her at the rector's table.

Mrs. Ladbroke had not yet discovered that she was trying Maria's feelings, by allowing her conversation with her generally to consist in asking questions about her mother. Maria replied with pathos and nature—a faltering voice—the melody broken; but nothing but tears, which, though kept down, would not for ever be controlled, could enforce on the comprehension of the inquisitor, that the subject was a painful one; and it generally ended with the remark—“Ah, well, my dear! tears will do no good; but, in Heaven's name, cry away, if it gives you any satisfaction!”

It was not long before the squire perceived the ground Maria was gaining in every one's good graces. His father would often address her at dinner; and sometimes bestow upon her a glass of his very best wine at the end of it.

Mrs.

Mrs. Ladbrooke, it must be confessed, was rather quiescent than kind; but he who had dreaded her fastidiousness, knew how to value this accordingly. As to himself, Maria had intoxicated him: the more he saw of her, the more it increased his sensibility. What would he not give to tell her that he loved her! but it was impossible: he had hardly spoken to her; but was forced to endure a buckram sort of demeanour whenever she was present, to keep shut the eyes of his parents. Yet though his tongue was tied, there were many opportunities, and opportunities never let go by, in which he could make some attempts at pleasing her; and though they never took any other character but that of civility, yet he, knowing the feeling that dictated them, lived in hopes that they might make her aware that she was not looked on by him with indifference.

But Maria had lost none of her dullness in this respect; indeed, if possible, she

she was more stupid than when so unconsciously perplexing her friend, the young apothecary. She had, in fact, no idea of the passion of love; and while free from the infatuation of being pleased, nothing would have been more difficult than to have persuaded her that she herself was pleasing. To her there was no glory or pride in conquest; indeed, she knew nothing of the sort of thing; and, perhaps, the squire was the last person to inspire it. Yet, at the same time that she possessed this callosity of feeling in regard to love, she was not indifferent to well earned praise, and her heart glowed with satisfaction when she acquired it; as she was glad to see, that in well executing the tasks assigned her, she had it in her power to ensure it.

The squire was sure to meet the object of his love every day at dinner. The whole morning he was impatiently awaiting the hour; and when it did

come, such was his perturbation, that the moments he had longed for were allowed to glide away without his daring to direct his eyes towards her. Growing bold, however, their glances would meet; his so unsteady, and looking so constrained, that she more than once supposed a crumb had gone the wrong way with him; while hers, owning no secondary expression, as often rested on him, with the same careless ease as they did on his mother or the rector.

Yet notwithstanding Maria had replied to no one signal of Cupid's freemasonry, he yet resolved, when he could pronounce that his heart was decided in its choice, to make her that offer, the acceptance of which was to constitute his felicity. Arrived at this climax, he should no longer stand in awe of either his mother or his father; he was independent; and though now he was aware that any suspicion of his intentions

intentions would be the signal of their obliging Maria to quit their protection, yet, when he had provided her a house of her own, there ceased to be a necessity for keeping any longer his happiness a secret.

But it was difficult to cramp his feelings into the circumference he had prescribed to himself—to live with one so suited to his wishes, and yet be for ever separated! Every kind word Maria spoke, though with a kindness only natural to her, tended to cement his affection, and to render him still more impatient to learn the success he should meet when he proclaimed his hopes and desires.

But all this tumult of the heart passed unheeded by her who gave rise to it. The squire to her was but the squire; a good-tempered, odd-dispositioned, handsome young man, whom she should like better if he did not keep her waiting so long, till he had picked out the nicest bits for her at dinner.

But this was not all he did to shew the consideration he felt for her; but Maria knew not that to him she owed it. Her tasks were often lightened, by the helping hand of one of the under women servants: Maria thought the assistance was offered gratuitously, but this was not the case. The squire had money to bestow, and the girl was earning an honest penny.

No one to have known the squire would have supposed him adequate to perform any thing in the shape of a delicate attention; but love it is that worketh wonders! and some of the productions of our best authors found their way into Maria's room, without her either valuing them, or being able to give a guess how, and why, they were brought there. The sweetest flowers were trained to grow under her window, and these she did value; but the gardener received her thanks for the attention, not the squire, who had instigated it.

But

But Maria could only spare a glance to the beauties of nature, while pausing for a moment over her needle; the genius, the sensibility of her heart, was all wrapped up in the fulfilment of her duties; she knew it was to their regular performance that she could alone look for the continuance of Mrs. Ladbroke's protection—a protection invaluable in her mind, though balanced against leisure and free agency. Once lost, she would become a wanderer. From her aunt she had little to expect, and though she had a trifling income of her own, she knew it was not sufficient to administer in any way, if thrown upon herself, to her necessities. She was therefore circumspective in her conduct; ready at repairing errors when pointed out; and by devoting herself wholly to her occupations, endeavoured not only to deserve kindness, but to ensure it.

All this interfered sadly with the felicity

city of the squire; indeed he was, by staying at home, subjecting himself to the penalty of domestic dulness, without receiving from it as much as might indemnify it. Sometimes he talked of change of place, change of company, or taverns, gaming-tables, and horse-races. His parents only wondered he had buried himself by giving them his society so long; but, dull as it was, the squire took no other steps than talking of it to change it; but still consented to undergo its insipidity to be blest once a-day by the sight of Maria.

It was, however, a dear bought indulgence; restrained, as he thought, by the presence of his father and mother (not knowing that Maria had a repellant as well as an attractive power), he began to grow impatient—to pronounce that no good in the world could be done by sitting stiffly starched opposite each other; and to resolve to take measures
of

of bringing himself, and his intended *wife* (as he delighted to call her) better acquainted.

But this was sooner said than done. He knew he was hazarding much in taking any obvious steps towards accomplishing it—it was risking all upon the die! and he reflected that whatever turned up, Maria's comfort and good opinion of him might be no ways the better for it. This consideration was sufficient to tame him down into resignation; to bear with the chances of good fortune as they turned up for him; to compare accurately, and justly estimate, their respective degrees and advantages; and to hope that time, and a constant heart, would gain him the object of his desires.

There is, perhaps, no necessity to be deeply versed in love yourself, to enable you to estimate it, or to discover and deplore its absence in another; and

Maria, with her own mind owing its best endowments to nature only, could yet find fault with the deficiency of the squire. She saw that something was wanting, and though she could not point out the identical *something* required, yet she could make comparisons between him and the young apothecary, and even old doctor Raby gained an advantage, if brought into the scale of comparison with him.

But such as he was—and he was not much, but a good-tempered fellow—Maria saw the squire to a disadvantage. She saw him labouring under a sentiment he dared not betray, and feigning an indifference he could badly effect; losing his powers of pleasing in the ardency of the desire, and then giving way to irritability and intemperance on the discovery of his failure.

The squire possessed the manners of a gentleman, without that confidence in himself

himself which is requisite to shine forth in society. Dissatisfied with his want of success, he was oppressed with a timidity that obscured any talent he might have possessed, and brought down his general behaviour into a compound of whimsicality, superciliousness, and rudeness. Provoked with himself, discontented with the world, his illusions of youthful vanity destroyed, he ceased to attempt soaring after his powers; and gave up, though not without a struggle, the dignity of the scholar, the politeness of the gentleman, to sink down into what he supposed he should become, that is, "a good-natured quiet sort of a fellow."

But it was not easy to assume this character on the relinquishment of the other. Bitterness of sarcasm would sometimes burst from him, playfulness of humour, and readiness of wit; but the effort cost him dear: it was too unexpected to please; and not gaining the

applause he expected, he relapsed into more than his former taciturnity, and moped away his hours in silent complaints of the infelicity of his existence.

A consciousness of our own powers is the best preservative against their failure, while in proportion to our anxiety for fame, will be the difficulty to gain it. The squire, had he guessed this, was, however, too timid to try its effect. He fancied that though there were many things he did *not* know, yet he at least had the advantage of knowing something of himself—a knowledge that taught him his only chance of felicity was, to meet with a girl who had no more *esprit* than himself, and to marry her, and settle in the country.

His first glance at Maria shewed him the object he had been in search of shewed him one too beautiful not to please, and too quiet and unpretending to require much pleasing.

Before Mrs. Manners's death, the parsonage,

sonage, in his walks, was the point of attraction. There he would wander about ; but the seeing her whom he sought, possessed the power of sending him home in the utmost confusion. All this was very weak and very foolish, and he knew it ; and he had affirmed to his brothers that he had resolved on speaking to her, when he learnt by chance the intentions of his mother respecting her.

Relieved by it of much of his anxiety, he settled to rest quiet, till, by a close intercourse with her, he should be better able to judge of her pretensions to the securing his favour ; but these were few ; he could only see her head bent over her work as he passed her window on horse-back ; pray for an accidental meeting on the staircase, and cast intermittent glances at her and help her delicately, when seated *vis-a-vis* to her at dinner.

The scrupulous propriety of her manner, the simplicity of her words and de-

meanour, at length determined the resolves of the squire; and it is not to be wondered at, that ever on the watch to bring it about, before the expiration of many months he should find the opportunity of disclosing his sentiments towards her.

They met one morning by chance in the garden—the offer was made, and rejected.

The squire had learnt a long speech, which he kept ready for the occasion; but it was an unnecessary trouble, for Maria ~~was~~ so inveterately dull, she understood nothing till he sobered it down into the plain question of—"Will you marry me?"

Her reply was equally concise; she knew not any thing more was required of her, and she unhesitatingly answered—"No, I would rather not, I thank you."

This might have damped a man of
the

the world, and have rendered him incapable of further importuning; but the squire was prepared for something extraordinary; and as this was within bounds, he summoned resolution to ask her why she did not like him?

"I do like you," she replied, "but not well enough to marry you."

The squire became animated—he talked of time and attentions bringing her round to fulfil his wishes.

She emphatically rested her hand on his arm, as she replied—"No, Mr. Ladbroke, never suppose it. Besides," she continued, "why should we marry? don't we see each other every day, therefore what would be the use of it? and I must say, I never thought you so foolish as I do now for proposing it."

The squire turned away sick at heart, struggling between wounded pride and affection. He would have talked of the advantages

advantages to be gained to her by independence; but alas! of what value to him would be a heart bought over to his acceptance—a heart whose poverty had made it his own, not its independence!

The castle was now no place for the squire, yet he could not resolve to leave it; but rather trusted to labour and perseverance, to make him forget one whose indifference could not fail to assist in curing him of his weak infatuation.

His days, before passed in idle inactivity, were, if possible, more indolently wasted than ever. Reading had become a burden; he shunned pleasures that had formerly allured him; and, indeed, looked on every thing with inattention or disgust.

Maria was not blind to this change in his disposition; and fearless of the charge of inconsistency, she told him one day,
when

when she met him on the staircase, pale and dejected, "that she was sorry to see him look so unhappy, and that she would marry him, she was sure, if he wished it."

But the squire for once possessed acuteness of penetration and solidity of judgment, and he attentively regarded her as he said—"Maria, let not your kind nature either delude you, or allow me to take advantage of it. I have a good constitution, and shall get over this. I hope, at any rate, I have nothing to accuse myself of, but of possessing a heart too awake to your virtues. Were it otherwise, that is, were I to use unfair entreaties, or to hold out misleading inducements, you might call me culpable; and for Maria to reprove me, would be to plant that thorn in my bosom, of which no time could ease the rankling."

It appeared to Maria very absurd, and
of

of a piece with his usual inconsistency but the squire's well doing seemed to depend upon it; and she was brought at length cheerfully to promise that she would marry him some day, that was, if it was not acting in direct opposition to his parents' wishes.

The squire blessed her for the kindness; and though he had before said that he would not take advantage of her compassion, yet he examined the case with candour—gradually became less heroic; and, at last, thought it would be a ridiculous stretch of liberality, the not availing himself of her good intentions towards him.

This once arranged, he began to be less sanguine of securing the consent of his father and mother; and the timidity that marred so many of his best efforts, was not idle in interfering with his present arrangement.

To describe all his vacillations would
be

be to take up too much space in this my last volume; what others would call *indecision*, he called *prudence*—a term that authorized him to put off the effort, till he could enter upon it at the proper moment.

Thus month after month passed on, without bringing the affair to a climax. When he had made up his *voice* and his mind to the proper focus for disclosure, a feather would turn him from the subject; and his hours were spent in a perpetual succession of solicitude, and in lamenting his inability to put an end to them.

At this time letters were received from his brothers, announcing their intention of paying a visit to the castle—a visit that, “honest Jack” gave it to be understood, was only to secure the blessing of their parents before they entered the holy bands of matrimony; for he had got over his objections in regard to
his

his cousin ; and though Valentine hinted nothing about the subject, yet John took upon himself to say, that, the lady willing, on the same day Valentine would lead to the altar the rich and amiable Miss Wrexham.

The squire forgot not his own interests while attending to those of his brothers ; and he settled, within himself, the best time to bring in his *bill* was when theirs was in the act of passing.

To take Maria to the altar the same day that they approached it, now became his ardent desire ; and he looked out anxiously for his brothers, hoping, by the aid of their enlightened advice, he might preserve the peace at home, and yet succeed in attaining the object of his desires.

While indulging in plans as remarkable for their wisdom as their folly, for their justice as for their absurdity, he
was

was interrupted by the arrival of his brothers; and trusting to their policy rather than his own, he put away all schemes, till he could do it in conjunction with their advice and assistance.

CHAPTER VII.
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“WHAT is Mr. Tyson here for?” asked Maria, who had seen her old friend the apothecary from her window early in the morning. “Is Mrs. Ladbroke ill?” she said, as the servant set before her her breakfast.

The girl did not know; but she had heard the footman say, that young Mr. Ladbroke was main ill, and altered; and she did not doubt but he might be come to do what he could for him.

During the morning Maria's eyes often rested on the spot where she had seen him; and she observed to Pincher, more than once, that he little knew who  
was

was near him! Yet so ignorant was Maria of her own feelings, that she must have questioned them closely to have found out that she should be glad to see him. Her tasks were performed with their usual celerity; and so little did the moments dwell heavy on her hands, that she was surprised at their lapse when summoned to join the family party at table.

The squire threw an anxious look on Jack, as she entered, to see what effect her appearance had on him; and as Maria was looking very pretty at the moment, he was satisfied that she had excited his admiration.

Valentine, pleading his ill-health in excuse, had declined appearing at the table; and from its being the first moment his family had been together without him, the anxiety he excited became the subject of conversation.

“It is nothing at all mother,” observed



served Jack to Mrs. Ladbroke's fears respecting him. "Depend on it, as he tells us he has made up his mind to give up the heiress and take to the cloth, he will become a jolly fat curate in a twinkling."

Valentine's appearance, however, was so distinct from the thing, that his mother shook her head in disbelief of it; and she said—"I hope I may be mistaken; but there is a look in Valentine's face that tells me, whatever is the matter with him, he will not very easily get over it."

"He should have known his own mind," observed the rector, in a tone more of self-exculpation than anger. "Why was he once so glad to give up the curate for the lover, and now dying because he cannot as readily get rid of the lover for the curate?"

The squire said, he thought all young men should marry early. And Jack  
agreed.

agreed, that if there was no such thing as hunting and racing, the sooner they noosed themselves the better.

The fears of his family were not exaggerated in regard to the health of Valentine Ladbroke. The pallid look—the dimmed eye—the languid and feeble step, all proclaimed him much worse than he was willing to allow himself to be. Indeed, to lull their anxieties seemed to be with him a principal object; and, with a cheerful voice and manner, he was under his mother's window, and in conversation with her, at an early hour the following morning.

To keep up the deceit, he talked with vivacity of a walk round the shrubbery, and of endangering a famine in the land by the appetite he should bring home for breakfast. He departed—and, when seen again, he was leaning, weak and exhausted, on Maria's arm, and scarcely able to crawl across the lawn to the breakfast-room.

By

By accident they had met in the shrubbery—he springing towards him, and affectionately clasping his hand in hers; he staggering—breathless—and apparently ungratified by her animatedly expressed recollection.

Maria's delight, however, was soon quieted down into apprehension and solicitude. She saw him altered, and so visibly suffering under indisposition, that she said—"I think, Mr. Tyson, before you attempt to cure master Val, your own health should first be attended to."

A faint smile illuminated his countenance, as he replied—"Still the same little simpleton! And have you, Maria, yet to learn that when master Val, as you call him, is cured, apothecary Tyson need have no fears concerning his own restoration?"

Maria looked at him with an expression of inquisitiveness—"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean nothing, Maria," he replied,  
in

in an impatient and abrupt manner, "only remember, that before my family, I am Valentine Ladbroke, and not apothecary Tyson."

"Then why did you say you were?" Maria demanded, in a tone that shewed she was not best pleased with the deception put upon her.

He interrupted her—"I never said so, Maria. You took it for granted, and I gave into the mistake, little guessing how much plain-dealing might have spared me."

His bosom ~~seemed~~ <sup>was</sup> labouring with a wo that Maria could pity, though she could not fathom; and she was no nearer its discovery when he said, appearing to feel intensely every word he uttered—"And when, Maria, do you become the wife of Gerald?"

"When he can get his father's and mother's consent," she replied, perfectly free from embarrassment.

He cast on her a look that would read her soul; then asked, in a tone of irony —“ And when is the impatient swain to set about it ?”

With the same careless ease as before, Maria replied, that she did not know.

Again Valentine's eye rested steadily on her, as he said—“ And is this then all the interest in the subject Maria has to give ? Does kindness exist nowhere but in her words ? Is fondness only to be traced in the glances from her eye ? You have a cold heart, Maria !” he said, letting fall the hand he had taken, and endeavouring to check his feelings. But he laughed hysterically as he continued —“ And so Gerald is waiting to get the consent of his mother ? Heaven defend me !” He gnashed his teeth, as turning away, he said, in a tone, plaintive alone from illness, for his eyes flashed fire—

“ —————What would he do,  
Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
That I have ?”

There

There was a peculiarity in the manner of Valentine, and in the expression of his feelings, that often frightened Maria as much as it interested her. Sometimes he would taunt her with her indifference to his brother, and at others his agitation and irritability would be wound up to the highest pitch, by ascribing and depicting to her the extent to which she loved him.

There was so much inconsistency in all this, that Maria suffered it to exhaust itself without any opposition; indeed, his transition from one idea to the other, when they were alone, was so rapid and abrupt, that it took from her the power of following him, or of being able to specify the exact state of sentiments that appeared so nearly to interest him. He was indeed too ill to bear contradiction; his will, in the family, had become a law; and he enjoyed all the indulgences that affection could procure him. Un-

settled and dissatisfied, however, he would wander from one end of the house to the other; and, such is the restlessness of those indisposed, he was as often to be found in the comfortless little room appropriated to Maria, as in those apartments where sofas and shaded windows were arranged for his ease and convenience.

But notwithstanding every care, Valentine Ladbroke sensibly became much worse, and change of air was prescribed him. He shuddered with disgust as it was intimated to him; and on his first emotion subsiding, he replied—"Perhaps it would have been as well had I never come here; but now——" and his melancholy tones thrilled to a faint cry of joy—"now it is the only blessing left me."

While soothing his mother with the assurance that he should soon recover, the intenseness of some concealed sorrow overpowered

overpowered him; and in a state of torpor he was carried to his room, and was for a long time unconscious of every thing. Hope now died within every bosom: he was loved by all, and all shewed the grief they were enduring for him. By turns his mother, his brothers, and the servants, watched by him; and Maria, known to be so gentle and so kind, was too invaluable a nurse to be omitted. In her turn she took her seat at the side of his couch, and watched by him, checking the sorrowful feelings such suffering excited, that she might with diligence attend to his desires.

But the poor patient could ask for nothing; an intense fever burnt within his veins; yet a low plaintive murmur alone proclaimed his suffering. At times, however, in an inarticulate voice, he would make an endeavour to speak; and Maria, wishing to catch the sound, laid her cheek close to his pillow. But the



effort had been great; and again the poor sufferer was silent; yet the low murmur would again escape him, when Maria, giving up the hope of understanding him, lifted her head, and again seated herself beside him.

It was one night, when Valentine had been unusually calm through the day, that when Maria relieved the watch by his side, a look of gratitude from the poor patient gleamed upon her; it was a look that she could never forget; and she dropped on her knees by the side of the bed, and offered up a thanksgiving, for even this slender promise of recovery. The joy of her heart was too great to be endured; it relieved itself in a burst of tears; and unable to check them, she buried her face in the coverlet. While stifling her sobs as well as she could, a faint voice broke upon her ear; it was Valentine's! but he could only utter—"Those tears, Maria, make me die contented."

With

With a spirit broken by grief, and every feeling lost, but, that of sorrow, she rested her pallid cheek by the side of him, folded his hand within hers, and in a piteous tone, could only utter over and over again the name of Valentine! There was something plaintively soothing in the tone; the breathing of him she called on became calm, and he soon apparently enjoyed the repose of a placid slumber. To move was now impossible; she found that his head was resting on her arm; and worn out by her own feelings and long watching, in a few moments Maria slumbered with him.

When she awoke, the patient had raised his head, and was, with a languid expression of delight, regarding her. Maria arose gently from her recumbent posture, while the rosy cheek that burnt like a slumbering child's, received an additional tint, from shame at the situation in which Valentine had discovered her.

It was a feeling she could not account for—a feeling not to be outweighed by the one she experienced at the same time, of pleasure and joy, in knowing that to have raised his head in the manner he had, that Valentine must be better. Under its influence she receded a step from the couch, and with her eyes sunk, seated herself in such a manner that he could not see her.

There was a long pause; but at length a deep sigh burst upon Maria's hearing, and again she was close by the side of the sufferer. He had not changed the position in which Maria had left him; his head was partly raised from the pillow, and his hand was soon again locked fondly within that of his nurse's. In a low, calm voice, he in a few moments addressed her, saying—"Maria, I think I have not many hours to live—nay, dear," for she clung still closer to him, "*you* even now cannot save me: the spirit,

spirit, Maria, must fly, when the sad heart is broken." An universal tremor seized him. Maria offered to call assistance—to awake the nurse, who was in a deep sleep at the end of the chamber; but he shook his head, and with an effort, continued—"Maria, never let my brother know I loved you."

"Loved me!" repeated Maria, timidly.

"Yes, Maria—fondly loved you! doated on you, from the first moment that I ever saw you. But what has it produced?" he continued: "I have served you, it is true; but I have lost you—irretrievably lost you; for I dare not live to see you married to my brother." He felt his hand pressed to Maria's lips, but he heard not the words she uttered; they were broken, and inarticulate: she felt that he understood her not. The moments were precious: his head had sunk, exhausted—she summoned up all

her strength.—“Hear me, Valentine!” she said; “I do not—I never loved your brother. Hear me, Valentine! I would have married him, because he wished it; but, Valentine, this hour shews me too plainly my own feelings, for me now to think about it. Valentine,” she repeated, softly, and tenderly leaning over him—“Valentine!” She paused—hesitated for a moment.—“Valentine!” again she murmured, “I dare not say the word; and yet, is this a moment to conceal it from you? No, no; Valentine shall know my heart. It loves you, Valentine! We will die together; and my last breath shall again repeat—” she exerted her voice—“Valentine, Maria loves you!” and then sunk senseless on his bosom.

CHAPTER VIII.  
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WHILE doctor Raby was congratulating himself on his skill, and while the family of the Ladbrookes were wondering at the strength of a young and good constitution, Valentine slowly recovered; yet he was long before he could move any further than his dressing-room, or endure the exertion of talking. The being read to was his only recreation; and as Maria's soft and melodious voice was considered the best calculated to amuse, without fatiguing him, she received orders from his mother to leave every thing else undone, that she might wholly and solely attend to him. What

a situation for a girl just learning how to love! beginning to doat on one brother, while her hand was promised to the other!

She turned with disgust from the recollection of her contract; and sad forebodings clung about her heart—compunctions for the double-dealing she was practising, and fear that to leave all and seek some other service, would be again to drive to the gates of death her fond, her doting lover. Many were her resolves upon the subject: sometimes she determined to tell Gerald all—to ask him to release her from her promise, and to forgive her for indulging this unrestrained affection for his brother. Then she would think herself justified in entertaining it. What had Gerald done in comparison with Valentine? She loved to hear him tell of his secret gratification, in having sacrificed himself, to leave the parsonage to her mother. He was determined, he said, that
for

for Maria's sake, she should never leave it; and Maria wept, and thought for this, a life spent in administering to his wishes was too little ever to repay the vastness of her obligation.

Thus did she find reason for the nourishing her new-found passion, while the premeditated disclosure to the squire was forgotten. It promised indeed to be attended with too much danger—too much risk to the health of him whose happiness was dearer to her than her own, to be entered on rashly; and she thought that in sparing one brother, she was almost justified in continuing her deceit towards the other.

Gerald all this time suspected nothing; or if he did, he kept his suspicions within his own bosom. It was this confidence that tortured Maria severely: she felt he had opened his heart to one who had proved unfaithful to the trust; and she would tremble and turn pale

pale when, with the freedom and affection of a brother, he would enter Valentine's room and find them together. It was then that a thousand times she was on the point of committing their secret to him; but with timidity she would recoil from it, not daring to raise the veil, that to her mind of innocence seemed to promise the ruin of her reputation. With shame her eyes sunk before him she felt she had injured; her voice died within her; and when he would ask her to continue the book she was reading for his brother's amusement, vain was the attempt; and murmuring some faint excuse, she would hurry away from the scene, and weep away her griefs in the solitude of her own chamber.

Valentine saw, and pitied these struggles of conscience, without possessing either the strength of mind or body to relieve them; and while they increased her value in his eyes, he shrunk still
more

more from bringing to a climax that destiny, which must ordain him to endeavour, at least, to live without her. The effect of these tormenting struggles was a protracted recovery; and though he was pronounced to have escaped for a time entering the gates of death, yet the pale cheek, the sunken eye, proclaimed that he still lingered near its portals.

Maria saw, and felt that she was essential to his existence. If she refrained from entering his room at the stated time, he would become restless and irritable, and a relapse was for some days the consequence. What could she do under these circumstances? nothing, but as she watched by his side, ask mercy from Heaven to bear her through, and whisper a promise in his ear that no scruples on her part should again bring him to this extremity. It was therefore no use to avoid rocks, when the deviation

tion from her course only tended to throw her into greater danger; or to form plans, when one reproachful look from her suffering lover rendered them wholly abortive.

She was reading one day, with much pathos, the story of two unfortunate lovers, when the squire unexpectedly entered: the tears were hanging on her lashes; and Valentine was looking more than usually pale and dejected. Gerald looked at them with an expression of acute inquiry.—“What is the matter?” he asked.

“Nothing,” Valentine replied. But Maria pointed to the page of her book, and concealed her face within the folds of her handkerchief. It was replete with “thoughts that breathe, and words that burn;” but the squire read it with perfect composure; and as he returned it to Maria, said—“I see no occasion to be affected by a picture drawn so completely

ly

ly with a poet's distempered fancy : rather, Maria, let us rejoice, that though protracted, our happiness will know nothing of this turbulent misery."

Maria's sobs were now most audible.

"How weak this is, Maria!" he said, with a tone of some impatience, and making an effort at the same time to remove her handkerchief—"how very weak, dear girl!"

"Rather say culpable," she replied ; but the voice was stifled, and Gerald heard it not.

"What does she say?" he inquired, looking first towards her for an answer, and then towards his brother.

"Nothing—nothing," Valentine hastily replied, and with much agitation.

Gerald shook his head ; but he relieved the apprehension that he knew too much, by saying—"The perusal of these sort of books may do very well for those whose nerves are made of dough ; but I
would

would advise your little nurse to select something less touching to the sensibility of herself and her patient."

Maria raised her eyes suddenly, to discover the extent of his meaning; but there was **no** ambiguity in his look—nothing but perfect confidence; and taking the book from her hand, and placing it on a stand, with a satisfied smile at his arrangement, he left them.

This was a moment trying to them both: they looked volumes! but not a word was spoken; and even Maria's tears were dried up with the intensity of her feelings. After a time she arose; there was a deep sorrow in her look; but she said, with calmness—"Valentine, I cannot read to you to-morrow: we shall be happier—better, if we sacrifice our love to the fulfilment of our duty." She opened the door as she ceased speaking.

"Maria," he said, following her and taking

taking her hand with convulsive emotion, as she was about to leave him, "before I see you again, Gerald shall know all. The recital, it is true, will cost me much." He looked mournfully at her. "God bless you, love!" he said, and a pang shot across his expressive countenance, as he continued—"Perhaps to-morrow there will be no occasion for you to break your word." He shook his head reproachfully. "You will not read to me, Maria, you say? but if the heart is cold, it cannot reproach you."

He burst into a transport of grief and tenderness as he concluded. Maria shuddered as she clung to him, and her check paled to a tint of fearful whiteness. In vain did he now beg not to afflict her: her head drooped upon his shoulder, and she spoke not. Valentine was alarmed; he shook her apprehensively.—"Maria!" he exclaimed—

"Maria,

“ Maria, look up ! tell me, Maria, what can I do ? what shall we do to escape this misery ? ”

“ Disclose all, Valentine,” she said, in a broken voice—“ tell all to your brother.”

The arm, with which he encircled her waist, relaxed in its hold ; but while the exertion appeared to her great, she continued—“ The disclosure may be trying, but it will be but a single misery, and will soon be over.” She looked towards him, seeming to expect an answer.

He considered a moment, and then replied—“ I fear, Maria, I cannot do it.” He struck his breast reproachfully, and murmured—“ It is conscience that thus unnerves me.”

“ Then God bless you, Valentine ! ” she said, a spark of heavenly fire brightening in her eye. “ I will leave you, Valentine, and all will again be well.” There was an acquired firmness in her manner—“ Heaven bless you ! ” she repeated,

peated, and hung her arms round him, with infantine fondness and simplicity. "I will go home to my aunt, Valentine, and then, in time, our hearts will be unburdened of this sorrow. We will learn to outlive this sad hour of trial, Valentine—we will pray for each other—we will call on Heaven for fortitude, and it will give us succour and assistance in surmounting our sorrow. God bless you, Valentine!" she again sadly murmured; "now let us part." She arose. He made no effort to detain her, but the mournful expression of his countenance shook her frame, as she witnessed his sufferings. "We part friends?" she asked, with a look of anxious inquiry—"good friends? Nay, tell me so, Valentine."

There was a melting tone in her voice, but he looked at her sternly, as he replied—"Maria, you are wilfully driving me on to misery—but go."

Maria

Maria turned to obey him, for the word was uttered with authority.—“I will, Valentine,” she said, but the act was beyond her power; and she had only proceeded three steps, when she sunk, insensible, to the ground before him.

Maria was in her own room on her bed when she recovered her senses; she knew not how she had been conveyed thither, but the recollection came strong upon her memory of all the circumstances that had occasioned the estrangement of her faculties, and she inquired of the servant who watched beside her, how long she had been ill, and if the family were aware of her indisposition? But the servant knew little about the matter. Mr. Valentine had conveyed her, in his arms, to her chamber, and though, as she expressed it, he looked *worserer* than herself, he had twice been to inquire after her.

Maria

Maria pressed her hand on her heart, to still its impetuous throbbings. She recollected the resolve she had formed, of leaving the castle, and she prepared to arrange her ideas to the acting up to it; but she sickened over the thoughts of what she should leave behind; all that had captivated her young heart would then be but as a passing vision, and in recollection only would she then be able to dwell on the object of her dearest—her best wishes. The idea of leaving the castle had often been indulged in, but it had always been as a thing in the distance; now it broke upon her, in all its vastness of misery; she looked upon it as a necessary and imperative act of duty, and she was weeping over it, with all the tenderness of her nature, when the door opened, and her tears were checked by the appearance of Mrs. Ladbroke. There was, however, nothing to intimidate in
her

her manner; she came, she said, at the desire of her son Valentine, who had informed her that Maria was indisposed, and to inquire whether she thought medical assistance at all necessary. There was an unusual kindness in her that confounded Maria, and made her still more keenly feel the sense of humiliation that overpowered her. But it was a moment not to be neglected; self-reproach urged her on; and shrinking to her pillow, and clasping her hands, with an expression of agony, she told Mrs. Ladbroke, without any reservation, that she must leave her.

Mrs. Ladbroke listened, at first, as she would to the ravings of a disordered fancy; but on her repeating it, she began to think there was something in it; and to ascertain it more closely, she asked her what were her new-found objections to a home, which had hitherto appeared to have come up to the extent of her wishes?

Maria's

Maria's reply was given with simplicity, and with all her native sincerity. She said she loved one of the Mr. Ladbrookes too much, while, she feared, she never should be able to feel any thing for the other.

This speech almost justified Mrs. Ladbrooke's former apprehensions, and she began to think "the child," as she generally termed her, could only be under the influence of delirium, and was merely talking at random.

The conflict, however, of Maria's feelings had a little subsided with her disclosure; and rising on her bed, she endeavoured to beg her forgiveness, and to thank Mrs. Ladbrooke for all her kindness; and proceeded to tell her, that she intended immediately writing to her aunt; and that, after stating every circumstance, she made no doubt but that she would applaud her for the sacrifice, on her part, and would readily consent to receive her.

There was some method in all this. Mrs. Ladbroke questioned closely, and she was not long in understanding all—namely, that Maria was engaged to one of her sons, in love with another, and, to escape them both, was about to leave her. The surprise she felt prevented her speaking, and Maria was, for a moment, left in uncertainty, as to what were her ideas concerning the whole proceeding. At length, however, with an imposing “hem,” to clear her throat, she found words to address her, and told her, that to leave the situation in which her mother had so gladly consented to her being placed, was only to get out of one error by falling into another. —“Nonsense, child!” she said, seeing Maria about to speak; “I wont hear of it, I tell you. You need not see anything of *the boys*, if you keep to your own room; and I will take good care, and teach them to forget you.” She appeared to consider a moment, and then
continued—

continued—"I cannot part with you, I tell you. Why, there is all the new linen to mark—it is nonsense to think of **it**. Besides, under my own eye, I shall **be** more sure my young gentlemen are returning to their senses, than if I lost sight of you."

This last observation seemed brought forth to reconcile her own mind to the arrangement, and it was satisfactory; for, with a complacent look, she set about placing Maria's pillow comfortably, and wishing her better, she left her.

Maria had pressed her hand, as it hastily passed her, and she had shewn no feeling of displeasure. It was strange, but, altogether, Maria's heart was happier. She had deposited her cares in her patroness's keeping; and though she doubted not but her confinement would be strict, yet she felt that it was better the having a guard placed over her, than

to have the charge of herself upon her own responsibility.

The next day she entered again upon her long-neglected occupations, but her heart was sad ; and when the time came that she usually passed with Valentine, the tears dropped fast upon her work, as she thought how much he would feel her absence, and how much he would miss the sympathy of a fond heart, that soothed while it participated in his sufferings. Her soul was occupied by his image ; she depicted him to herself, pale and agonized as he was the last moment she had seen him, and she loved him more ardently, as she thought of what he was enduring. There was, however, much for memory to dwell on, that might have soothed the pang of separation—she knew that she was loved. But Maria saw it not in this light ; it was the mainspring of their suffering ; and she would have united her prayers with any one's,

one's, who would have begged of Heaven that Valentine might forget her. With this feeling, there was nothing torturing in the solitary confinement of her chamber; she relaxed in no one article of duty, and a simple "good-night!" breathed from Valentine to her, as he unexpectedly passed, leaning on his servant's arm, before her window, made her dry up her tears, and pass the evening happily.

About this time things changed. It appeared that Miss Wrexham seemed to think, that to succeed, she must take some active steps to follow up her courtship; and a letter came to Mrs. Ladbrooke, stating, that, with her permission, she, for a few days, would take up her residence at the castle. The compliment, however, of seeking permission was quite a *façon de parler*; she followed too close upon her letter to render it possible; but Mrs. Ladbrooke consoled her-

self for the displeasure this conduct would produce in Valentine, by the reflection, that an heiress could never be unwelcome, where there were three sons to provide for.

To Valentine her conduct was inexplicable. He had written to her explicitly ; and while he spared her delicacy, by placing all their past intercourse to the wishes and active measures of their parents, yet he affirmed, he would no longer warp the dictates of an upright heart, by seeking either to deceive her, or, for another moment, to give into them. His love, he told her, was not in his own gift ; and here was introduced a soothing clause, saying, that otherwise it might have become her own. Chance had, however, bestowed it on another. He told her he was wretched and unhappy ; but he concluded by saying, he expected to find some consolation, in having dealt openly by one, who could
not

not fail of bestowing on him her pity, as well as her forgiveness. After this, nothing could equal his surprise, on seeing her carriage drive up the avenue; but illness here stood his friend; he persuaded himself he was too unwell to join his family, and confined himself closely to his apartments.

But, restless and sad as he was, it was hard to get through the tedious hours. Many days had elapsed since he had seen Maria, and his only pleasure was to look through the books that she had read to him, dwelling on the parts that she had dwelt on, repeating to himself her sensible remarks upon them, and her eloquent and simple reasoning. Suddenly he would resolve to write to her, to exhort her not to leave the castle, and to entreat her suffering and enduring spirit to support itself, for the sake of him who so truly loved her; but this was a plan a moment's reflection

turned him from; he had promised her he would do nothing more, but love on, in sad hopelessness. This he could not help, but he would keep his word concerning the interests of his brother.

The castle was soon turned into the scene of gaiety, in the hope of amusing the heiress; riding parties were formed, invitations accepted, and all this was done without Miss Wrexham seeming to expect, or even to wish, to have an interview with her recreant lover.

“I cannot think what she is at,” said “honest Jack” one day, as he lounged, for a moment, into the room of his still invalid brother; “but if I mistake her not, she is gone on a new scent—that is, I could almost pronounce you to be cut out in her affections.”

Valentine gave an exclamation of joy, and his brother proceeded—“She is come here, take my word, to reconnoitre, and to question us, as the only chance

chance left of finding her fairy lover."

"What do you mean?" asked Valentine, with quickness—"you cannot be alluding to Gerald?"

John laughed.—"Not much of the fairy there, I think," he said. "No, it is not Gerald; neither is it myself," answering Valentine's look of interrogation; "but what do you think of my *second self*? that is, I have discovered, not only by Miss Wrexham's words, but by a likeness, sketched from memory, which I to-day dragged from her workbox, that while Sybella was nearly losing one heart, she gained another; and in her *débüt* as a jockey, she not only gained the plate from me, but has, if words and looks are to be believed, eased you of the heart of the heiress."

The brothers laughed heartily at the idea, and Valentine observed—"I can scarcely wonder at it, for never, to my mind, could Apollo, with his golden
H 5 hair,

hair, have looked more captivating to the female heart, than did our pretty masquerading cousin; the curls rivalling his in splendour, stealing from the confines of her little velvet cap—the bright blue eye, ever timidly seeking the ground, after every glance around that it had dared to venture—then the soft dimpling of the cheek, when we addressed her. I cannot think what we could all have been dreaming about, not to have immediately recognised her.”

“Who you were in the seventh heaven with, was easily to be ascertained,” replied his brother.

“How?” said Valentine, in some trepidation; and John smiled, as he replied—“Why, it was not very difficult to perceive that Rosalie Manners pleased you.”

Valentine felt reassured, and his brother observed—“I think she might be made to look very handsome.”

Valentine

Valentine agreed with him.

“ Maria, on the contrary,” John continued, “ is——”

“ Yes—I think she is.”

“ What ?” asked John, in some surprise at the interruption and sudden answer of his brother; and he smiled, as he again asked—“ what is she ?”

“ What you were saying.”

John, while protesting he had said nothing, again smiled, with much meaning; and Valentine, seeing he had committed himself, soon confessed all his joys and sorrows to his brother.

CHAPTER IX.
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ROSALIE all this time was wandering about the country with her aunt, in the capacity of *crutch*, and partaking with her of every pleasure each watering-place produced them.

Lady Delaware had not yet forgotten that she was a woman disappointed in her affections, and gaiety was had recourse to, more as a means, as she expressed it, "of taking her from herself," than for any gratification it afforded her. To Rosalie, however, whatever the reason, the result was the same, and she began, with many drawbacks, it must be confessed, to taste its delights—to feel  
that

that she elicited admiration, and to allow that the books she had read were not all false pictures of mundane felicity.

It is true, her aunt at the same time spared no pains to keep her in the background; but this her office in a great measure controverted; where her ladyship was, there must Rosalie be also, participating in the same attentions, and sometimes securing by her attractions, those that might otherwise not have fallen to them. At first lady Delaware scarcely knew how to tolerate all this; she could well have dispensed with notice gained her through so strange a medium; for it was *strange* to her, that Rosalie Manners, though now making rapid strides at a fashionable appearance, should possess any power of creating admiration. What charms she had, and what they could be, puzzled much her ladyship; they were, however, her own property; and lady Delaware, though  
she



she sometimes made the endeavour, could issue no edict sufficiently powerful to suppress them.

Rosalie was now in a manner independent; and as the poverty of her wardrobe had been always the reason alleged against her appearance in society, her little income was all expended in setting to rights the evil; and with no idea of the length of fancy her purse would allow her to indulge in, she found, with some surprise, that purse, which to her had seemed to possess the gift of Fortunatus, in three months all expended. But this mattered little after the first shock; she dealt with her aunt's tradespeople; and they had so often entreated she would allow them the honour of placing her name upon their books, instead of paying for every trifle, that she was under no scruples in giving them the indulgence.

This system of *ticking* once on foot,  
her

her bills lengthened with prodigious celerity ; and at the end of the first twelve-month, she found two years' income had been expended.

The sight of her bills made her feel sick and frightened ; but Rosalie Manners had now little time to waste in mourning over what now could not be helped ; and so that she could keep it a secret from her aunt, and be less extravagant in future, she did not see that much harm could come of it. But though the recollection of her unpaid bills would for an hour each night make her pillow uneasy, yet joy and forgetfulness came with the morrow ; and to have seen her in society, no one would have suspected that a care ever for a moment oppressed her. With her indeed all was hope and felicity ; and in the acme of it, she sat down and wrote thus to her sister :

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“ Never

“ Never, my dear Mirry, was your sister Rosy more perfectly happy. I go out with my aunt every evening, dressed so smart, and looking so well, that I am sure neither Pincher, you, or Jenny, would know me; and in the morning, instead of working and reading as I used to do, I walk about with her all over the town, for she is still too lame to walk without me; which, though I pity her for, I cannot at the same time help thinking was a fine thing for me. We are now at Hastings, which is a place by the sea—not a very nice town, but full of delightful company. You cannot think the joy it is to go to balls, and to dance with those that please you. How I manage to dance so well, considering I never learnt, I cannot think; but I watched them for a long time before I began, and practised so much in my own room, that I now, even my aunt allows, get on admirably.

“ I am

“I am not yet in love with any **body**, though I like all the **men** we know. One or two of these are, I am sure, in love with me; but it does not signify, as they have not yet asked leave to marry me. The women, I must tell you, are not quite so affable to me as the men—indeed they seem none of them good friends with each other, but pick and pull each other to pieces, which I think is malice and envy.”

“I find it is not so hard to talk as I once thought it would be; men do not like clever girls, they say; and so that you can relate with spirit all about the ball you were at the night before, it is all that is expected of you. Indeed no men talk of the clever things that poor papa used; and the old *sticks* that used to puzzle me so much in London—there is nothing in them, I assure you, to try one’s learning, for they only ask if you know such and such a person?—if you were at such and such a ball?—and if you  
are

are going to such and such a party? This is not very trying to one's erudition, and I have given up all books accordingly.

“ Every body dresses so well, that I find my money would go but a very little way towards making me look a remove from ordinary, if, that is, I kept within it; but this is impossible; and I owe a great deal in odd places, that I cannot at present settle. But this matters little while I can keep it a secret from my aunt, for London tradespeople never mind trusting you as long as you please; and this enables me, thank Heaven! to soar above the mean-looking white sarsnet things, that swarm in every assembly. While I think of it though, I must ask you not to fold up your letters so large and square; for though I am sure the people will never ask to be paid, yet they look so like *duns*, they quite startle me.

“ My aunt behaves much better to  
me

me than I could ever have expected ; indeed, from the sprain in her ankle, she is so helpless, that I am almost first and foremost in every thing when she has company at home, and sure to go with her when she goes out for society. Think of my dancing the other night with a man, who confessed, and not at all ashamed, though it is considered a *capital crime*, of never having been in London ! Before this I had thought him tolerably good-looking ; but never was the man in some play I have read more quickly transformed into an ass, than was this unfortunate young gentleman. To use one of John's college terms, from that moment I was *gravelled*. I had not a word to throw at him. Nothing came to my imagination but sillabubs and baa-lambs ; and I was about, with great condescension, to expatiate on them, when he asked me if I knew a Mrs. Brown in London ?

“ There were so many—‘ where did she

she live?'—'he did not know—she visited at his cousin's,' and—'he knew she came from London.'

"What can such people's ideas be of our great metropolis?—What are yours, Mirry? that it is a large country town, I suppose, where every one knows the business of his neighbours. I became disgusted as I reflected on the creature's ignorance, and settled myself till the dances should change, into the capacity of a listener, waiting to hear some more of his primeval observations. But whether he was frightened, or what, I know not, for never was oyster in love, or out, more mute than was my rural companion.

"The parties we go to, generally end with little dances; that is, we stand up and form a quadrille, while some young lady present, who cannot get a partner, seats herself at the pianoforte, and plays to us. They often laugh at me for always escaping the task of being the musician,

sician, not knowing, I suppose, that I cannot, and I see no use in my telling them; but I often wish I could play; indeed it would not be difficult to play as well as many of them. Whether they can do better I know not; but they play so out of tune, that I gained great applause from my partner the other night, by saying the tune gave me as just an idea of eternity, as a snake with its tail in its mouth—no end, no beginning. Indeed so little did the young lady know what she was about, that we were obliged to trust to Providence to put us right in our places.

“ I must not forget to tell you, that cousin John is tired with France, and embarks from thence next week for Brighton. As we are so near that place, we shall give him the meeting. This will be a surprise; for he has sent us no address; and my aunt does not know where to direct to him.”



CHAPTER X.  
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AT the time he had stated in his letter to his mother, sir John Delaware landed at Brighton. He had been a sufficient time in France to learn the full value of his own country—to admire its order and regularity—and to declare, that if “homely wit,” as Shakespeare says, is the consequence of staying at home, “homely wit” should be his, for that nothing should tempt him to leave it for the future.

A sea voyage has often given rise to poetical ideas; and it even, in spite of his qualms, had the power of making the young baronet sentimental. He
leant,

leant, in as becoming an attitude as the motion of the vessel would allow, against one of the shrouds.—“ England, with all thy faults I love thee still !” he said, from lord Byron ; and he would have gone on quoting, from one author to another, passages that suited him, had not his memory failed him.

But though his memory here played him false, it had lent its aid on other occasions. His residence abroad had not made him forget Ruth Pleydell ; but what was most extraordinary, considering it never failed to put her black stuff dress in the picture, he had not yet forgotten his cousin.

With his eyes fixed on vacancy, for to him who could see nothing but horses and dogs the sea *was* vacancy, he lost himself in a reverie, in which Rosalie Manners was the principal agent. There was pleasure mingled with some reproach in the scenes, this trying back to old times

times returned to him. Sometimes he was vexed with himself for the torment he had given her; and then he would change his position from the shrouds to a lounge over the quarter-railing. On the whole, however, he settled that the account betwixt them was nearly equal; in every skirmish it had been pretty much tit for tat, with no balance, on either side, of mercy shewn, or favour.

When he retired to his cabin, the thoughts of Rosalie, and the pleasure he anticipated in their meeting, still followed him; but here his sentiment failed, as taking a testy turn in his cot, he exclaimed—"Devil take the girl! I have only to place her in my dreams to establish myself her lover!"

At the Custom-House, had not his thoughts been repressed by his fears, he might still more have suspected himself of the character; but suspicion in that place for once was asleep, and the contraband

traband articles all escaped that he had brought over for his cousin.

Delighted with his luck, he was hurrying along the cliff, still thinking of his silks, and the pleasure they would give to Rosalie, when the fine figure of a young woman, turning out of a street, and continuing her way before him, rivetted his attention. He had seen but little of her face; she wore a close bonnet; indeed every thing was plain about her, but in good taste, that is, all was adapted to the very height of the fashion.

Rosalie, and the contents of his portmanteau, were voted a bore, and all forgotten; the lovely English girl still walked before him; he hurried after her; and though she walked fast, yet he made the attempt to pass her.

At this moment the porter, with his trunks, overtook him.

"Please your honour, to where shall I take them?"

“To the devil!”

The reply was as concise as possible, for his time was precious; he looked after the bright being before him, but “the fair incognita,” as he called her, had escaped him.

Aghast he stood, struck with a feeling of desolation—the porter was jogging on before.

“Burst the fellow!” exclaimed the travelled baronet, as he turned his eyes on every side wildly about him; but all to no purpose; the lady had vanished; and heaping all sorts of maledictions on the porter’s “thick head,” they reached the York Hotel together.

“It was the first Englishwoman I had met,” he said, as a sort of excuse for his hasty predilection; and seating himself at the same time close to the window of the coffee-room, in the hope that chance would again present her to him —“It was the first English girl I set my eyes

sir?" asked the baronet of a young man, who, by rising to the window, had appeared to feel the same interest as himself for her. The gentleman replied in the negative; that is, her name, he said, was unknown to him; she had been but a short time in the place, but was allowed by all who had seen her, to be the most perfect creature in all Brighton.

The baronet gave a nod and a groan at this animated account that burst from the stranger; and at the moment the waiter entered with the dinner.

"Whose house is that?" asked the baronet, pointing to the one where the "fair incognita" was at that moment arranging some flowers in the balcony. Her bonnet was off; and though the distance baffled a clear examination, yet she looked to sir John like an angel.

"Whose house is that, I say?" repeated the baronet, with much quickness, for the waiter had not heard him in his activity

tivity of fanning about his napkin, and drawing the claret.

"House, sir?—Yes, sir.—Where, sir?"

"There, sir," said sir John, pointing with as steady a hand as he could, for he had lost all patience.

"Red house, sir, with the green balcony? yes, sir."

"Who does it belong to, I say? the devil?"

"No, sir," replied the waiter, smiling in spite of himself, "it belongs at present to lady Delaware."

"Why, that is my mother!" said the baronet, so completely taken by surprise, that his words took the tone of a question.

The waiter did not know.

"How the devil should you?" returned sir John, rather provoked with the fellow. "But do you know the name of that lady?"

"Lady Delaware herself, sir."

A cast of disappointment passed over the baronet's face as he returned his eyes to the balcony. It had changed its proprietor. Sir John saw his mother, and the next moment he was beside her.

Rosalie Manners lost nothing in interest on a nearer investigation; and sir John professed, over and over again, that he could scarcely believe that it really was his cousin.

"I have lost something of the *humguffin* then?" asked Rosalie, with the ease and vivacity that had so long lain dormant within her.

Sir John could only wonder at his audacity:

She smiled; and placing her hand gracefully within his, said—"Let us now make up for our childish quarrels, by the good-will that we will feel towards each other for the future."

Sir John was enchanted, and they got through the first day without any thing
in

in the shape of a dispute coming upon them to make null and void the contract.

But the baronet was a twelvemonth older since they had last met; and Rosalie had put many years into one in her improvement; indeed she failed in none of the requisites which her cousin looked for in a fashionable female.

“Nothing but music, John!” Rosalie said to him one day, when he had made her understand, without *quite* coming to the point, that he had no desire to look further for a companion—“nothing but music, John!” Rosalie now knew how to look tender, and she continued—“Not that I should ever play to please myself; but when I see you listening to others, John, I often wish I could in the same way administer to your amusement.”

Their eyes met, and sir John felt that his fate was decided. But his mother was at the further end of the room,

therefore he merely replied—"It is true, Rosalie, you cannot play to me, but I do not know whether I would not willingly barter the talent, to see you quit, as you now are, of the knack your musical young ladies have, of flying to the instrument when they have nothing else to do, making it speak their idleness, by noisy waltzes and country dances, which they have not the energy to play in time, or patience to get to the end of." Rosalie smiled at the correctness of the picture, and he added—"Do not regret, therefore, Rosalie, that you cannot play; for I would gladly compound for the loss, by the gain; and when we want music, why, we will buy a *barrel-organ*."

The *we* gave Rosalie hopes that her cousin had some serious thoughts respecting her; indeed his manners were so changed towards her, that it needed no wonderful share of penetration to detect his tenderness, or to feel that it
would

would be her own fault if she did not turn it to some advantage.

The first party they were at together, she rivetted the chain she had flung upon him. The baronet saw her sought by many, and admired by all; he was proud of his choice; began to fear he might lose her by delay; therefore, to make sure, he laid an embargo on her as she ran up the stairs to her chamber, and impressing a kiss on her glowing cheek, in plain terms made his proposal.

Rosalie, not like most heroines, thought of her unpaid bills, caught at the offer, and at once said she would have him. He kissed her again and again, till darting from his arms, wild with delight, she sought her pillow.

Lady Delaware was too keen a looker-on, not soon to perceive that there was something like an understanding between the cousins. That Rosalie should admire her son, she did not wonder at;

but that sir John should return the compliment, never entered her comprehension.

Something must be done; and to put sir John on his guard, as she termed it, she one day ventured to hint, that if he did not take some steps to prevent it, Rosalie would be fool enough to fall in love with him.

The baronet could not see where would be the folly; but his mother looked serious, and talked of disparity. Sir John smiled as he repeated the word "disparity," and said, with the appearance of just pleasing himself with the joke—"Then, mother, you would not give your consent to my marrying her?"

"No, John," lady Delaware replied, with the same calmness she would have entered into any other trifling for his amusement.

"That would be a pity," he added, "supposing I intended asking you."

"You

"You would never be so foolish, John."

"No, mother." He laughed outright, for the jest increased—"No, mother, that I would not—ah, ah, ah! you may depend on me."

Once under the idea, every thing Rosalie did more strongly convinced her ladyship that she loved her cousin. Active measures must be pursued; and sir John, laughing all the time like a pickle of a child, was consulted as to what was to be done to remedy the evil.

"Send her away, mother," he said, "out of sight, out of mind," tells the adage; let us try the effect upon her."

He paused in breathless anxiety, and narrowly watched his mother.

After some consideration, her ladyship replied—"It was her mother's wish she should be placed in a respectable school, to be fitted to undertake the capacity of governess. Her own means will now

enable her to fulfil it; fifty pounds a-year will cover every thing. To be sure she is a great convenience to me; but it is time, dear John, when she can raise her eyes to you, that she should be taught what is her station."

"And when shall she go, ma'am?" he asked, calming himself down, that he might not betray how pleased he was with the arrangement.

"The sooner the better," his mother said.

"The sooner the better," he replied; and joy dancing in his eyes, he hurried out of the apartment.

In a week from that day all was arranged; and lady Delaware, from an upper window, saw Rosalie seated in the fly that was to bear her to the coach-office, from whence she was to proceed in the *patent safety* to London.

Her trunks were carried by a porter; and unlike the time when, as *Mr. Dumberly's*,

berly's, her wardrobe could have been confined in a silk handkerchief, the front seat of her little vehicle was piled to the top with her bandboxes.

Sir John had gone early with a party to spend the day at Worthing; and lady Delaware, as she sat alone in the drawing-room, did not know whether to feel regret, or to rejoice at a circumstance that had rendered her, in parting with Rosalie, so solitary and so helpless.

"I congratulate your ladyship," said the voice of a clerical gentleman from the street, an intimate friend, who had caught a peep of lady Delaware through the window.

She arose to speak to him, and looked round for Rosalie to assist her. She sighed involuntarily, reseated herself, and murmured, as she felt deeply her loss—"There is not much cause for congratulation."

In the next morning's paper all was explained.

explained. The cousins had met at the church—were married; and discharging the fly, placed themselves in the baronet's post-chariot, and took the road to Westcombe.

CHAPTER XI.
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THE *tinkering of the human heart*, that was taking place at the castle, did not seem to make much progress; Maria could not learn to forget Valentine, or Valentine to forget Maria.

The squire, if concerned at all, was quiescent under affliction; he rode out with the heiress, and though not a day passed but he contrived to see Maria, yet she felt, or fancied, that he was not so ardent in his affections. This was some consolation to her in her trouble; and when she heard his lively sallies as he passed her window with Miss Wrexham, his smiles were a talisman of peace  
to

to her bosom, and soothed the care of her nightly pillow. She was aware his mother had made him acquainted with her secret; and to support it as he did, was no herald of acute sensibility. Whatever his feelings might be, they extorted not one complaint—broke forth in no murmur; and she hoped he had discovered that the love he professed towards her was but a transient passion, and that he was now encouraging the transfer of it to another.

To Valentine, however, things were clearer; he had had an interview with his brother, and had confessed all; he saw the workings in his face as he proceeded—the struggles of a manly mind, bearing up against a bitter evil—sicken-  
ing under its disappointments, yet forbearing to utter a complaint about them.—“Is that all?” he said, in a brief but broken tone, as his brother concluded his confession, vigorously making an ef-  
fort

fort to appear calm and collected. "Mighty well!" he continued, attempting even the still further effort of appearing cheerful. "You knew her first, you say, and loved her? Mighty well, squire Gerald! then you are nothing better than a poacher—a vagabond deer-stealer! Forgive me, Valentine," he said, holding out his hand to him, "if I have encroached upon your interests; it was done blindly, and must now serve rather to shew that I admire your choice, than that I have given way to feelings that will tell against me. Forgive me, Val," he again said, still determined to look upon himself as the offender, notwithstanding his brother was taking it upon himself at the same time, and upbraiding himself accordingly. "She is a worthy girl," he added; "and, Val, you must love and cherish her." This was said in a voice of mingled love and sorrow; and he continued—"If she is happy,

happy, where will be the occasion for me to make myself miserable?"

It seemed no sooner said than done; for the next moment his brother saw him running races on the lawn with Miss Wrexham. But Valentine knew Miss Wrexham too well to fancy for a moment that she could **displace** Maria in his brother's affections; and the knowledge, while it still more increased the value of the effort, made him yet only less willing to take its advantage.

At this time the letter came with the news of Rosalie's marriage with her cousin. It seemed to her a thing of course that Maria should now live with her; and it concluded by stating, that she only waited to hear what day would suit her dear Mirry's wishes, before she sent the carriage and a servant to convey her to Westcombe.

Maria's heart sprung with delight and satisfaction, as she read of her sister's felicity;

felicity ; but she turned sick with regret on coming to the end of the letter. Again she must consent to leave the castle, to quit her pleasures and her pains, and to part with Valentine, perhaps for ever.

Mrs. Ladbroke had done nothing but doze on in comfortable security, while Maria was discharging her duties : not even the busy part that Cupid had taken had power to turn her interest, or to shake her confidence towards her. There was indeed so much propriety in every thing Maria did, so just to nature and to reason, that, in spite of the untoward events that had taken place, she could not blame her for giving in to the snares her sons had spread for her. This was the light in which she viewed it : that Maria loved in return, never entered her conception : it is true, she had said so ; but nothing she did—that is, there was nothing left undone to establish the as-  
 sertation.

sertion. Her tasks proceeded with diligence; and the pale cheek alone, which she attributed to her present confinement, was the only telltale of her smothered feelings. The unassuming gentleness, and winning kindness of her manner, had indeed secured her special favour; and with regret she learnt the change of things that now made it probable she would leave her. Nothing, however, could be done: a life of comparative servitude was not to be opposed to the one now held out to her; there could be nothing to recommend it; and regretting it almost as much as Maria did herself, they parted; and she set out, broken-hearted, to the residence of her sister.

The delight of again meeting her dear Rosalie, was the only thing that kept Maria from sinking under her affliction: her griefs and her cares would now be communicated to one who would truly sympathize

sympathize in her sorrows, alleviate the pressure of regret, and teach her to bear her privation.

But Valentine had promised he would never forget her; that she only should be his wife; and he concluded by a hasty insinuation, as he placed her in the carriage, that the moment might not be very far distant. She knew he would say nothing without reason; but they were subject to observation at the moment, and she could make no inquiries.

The young lady Delaware received her sister with all the affection of her nature: embraced her over and over again; and as she kissed her pale cheek, wept in sympathetic affliction. The sisters were much altered since they had last met; and the fond question was repeated from one to the other—"Are you dear Mirry?"—"Are you my darling Rosy?" They had indeed grown out of each other's knowledge, and met



as young women, while expecting to see the same form, the same face they had parted with when children. In manners there was also considerable difference: Rosalie, while she had lost all the romping predilection of the girl, had returned to all the vivaciousness of her youth; but gaiety and sprightliness were becoming to her: she was pretty, and she was witty; and all who pretended to either gallantry or taste, set her down as a professed beauty. Acquainted with all the mysteries of coquetry and conquest, she had the power of captivating all who approached her: every tongue informed her she was an object of admiration and of love, and she was no infidel in the belief of it.

Maria was still a distinct being from her sister; out of the sedateness of youth had sprung an ease and dignity of manner, that pleased, while it repelled those who approached her.

“Cousin John,” however, as he was  
still

still frequently termed, soon learnt to love his sister.—“ But what ails her, **Rosalie?**” he would ask; “ was she **always** so silent and so sad?” Rosalie shook her head significantly; and looking fondly at her, he said—“ **I** believe, **Rose**, we must teach her our plan; is it not so?”

“ What, John?”

“ Why, to try her luck at *heart versus head*; that is, to get into a fly, as you did, and follow her own inclinations.”

The young married couple were living in a round of perpetual amusement; the fashionable and the gay flocked to their standard; and the dowager lady Delaware was too politic and too pleased to live at the expence of others, not soon to overlook their late conduct, in the advantages it produced to her. Thus, with no drawback to their delights, they gaily chased on in the pursuit of pleasure,

sure, yawning most drearily in each other's face if they passed the day alone, or if some unforeseen allusion to economy checked them in their progress.

After the quiet of the castle, their house to Maria was a perfect sea of trouble; wave succeeding wave, each washing out the remembrance of the last; then ending, in its turn, in froth and bubble. A set of admirers soon pleased themselves by dangling after her; but to her they were a grievance rather than a blessing: to listen to some was a laborious operation, while to others it was a waste of time and attention. With thoughts true to Valentine, to her society was a burden—a tangled wilderness; and nettling many by her want of taste, she would leave them and seek seclusion.

Her sister saw, wondered, pitied, and condemned her extraordinary infatuation.—“You are losing the substance  
for

for the shadow," she said to her one day.

"How?" Maria asked.

"Why, turning a deaf ear to the best men in the land, to listen to the 'still small voice' of hope and expectation. Give him up, Mirry," she said, fondly and persuasively—"give him up. Valentine, to be sure, is a doughty knight, but what has he superior to lord Charles Standen?"

It was established in a very small word; Maria answered—"Every thing."

"Nonsense, Mirry! look at his fine face—his manly figure!"

"Oh, Rosalie!" Maria returned, half-laughing, half-reproachfully, "never recommend me a rake! he has a fine exterior, I grant; but to me it is disfigured by a profusion of vices, which, like clambering weeds and creepers, almost bury the noble plant that upholds them."

"Spices, my dear girl," said Rosalie, quaintly—"spices, to set off the tame

taste of human nature—handed down from parent to son, as family jewels were of old, to give a value to their posterity.”

“ I thank Heaven,” said Maria, fervently, “ that I see things differently ; lord Charles may be a man of fashion ; but with me this is rather against him, than for him. Personal consideration I think will never blind me to reason, or tempt me to tack my opinion on to that of the world—leading me, in spite of my judgment, to decide in his favour.” Lady Delaware smiled ; and Maria continued—“ I confess, Rosalie, I cannot see many things in the light in which you see them : the world has tutored your optics ; mine, I flatter myself, are still true to nature. Our lives have been spent differently ; and mine has left me that freedom of mind, which equally secures me from being deluded by singularity, or enslaved by prejudice. You, on the contrary, are seduced into applause

plause by every object that fashion places before you; slighting the worthy, if fashion disowns them, and upholding the contemptible, if fashion supports them. What will be the end of it, Rosy, I do not know " she said, half-laughing, half-earnest. " I wish I could teach you to examine with candour—to be less the slave of the world's caprice."

" Or, in other words," Rosalie interrupted, " a little less the victim of absurdity : is it not so?"

Maria was silent, and lady Delaware continued—" I am, I confess, sometimes amused myself, in comparing my present idea of the world, and my former conception of it. Nothing can be so different! sentiments that then completely occupied me, now have scarcely left an impression behind; desires which were formerly followed with ardour, are now remembered with disgust; and those I once considered foolish and contemptible,

are now the favourite theme of my imagination, and the delight, that is, the *solace* of my solitary hours."

Maria smiled, as she asked—"What hours, pray, out of the twenty-four, come under the denomination?"

"Nonsense, Mirry! you understand me: but I see you are laying by, while I am uttering all this folly, to bring out some 'wise saws' against me. *Mais n'importe*—and again, as they say in France, *chacun à son goût*; remember, Mirry, our lives have been lives of much privation; am I then to be condemned for now tasting indiscriminately of the pleasures it allows me?"

Maria kissed her sister affectionately, she could say nothing; but she retired to regret still more the bias her mind had taken.

## CHAPTER XII

It is now time to return to the castle. Valentine, regretting the absence of her he loved, had taken possession of the parsonage, "honest Jack" was looking forward to an early union with his cousin, and the squire, in spite of her professed love for the handsome jockey, was wearing out the recollection of Maria, in a flirtation with Miss Wrexham.

Whether it was *con amore* on his part, no one could tell, he was more animated than usual; and talked of the folly of selecting a companion for life, without some consideration for "the needful" Yet he could observe with acuteness, at



the same time, the laxity of discipline, the want of sense, and the neglect of decorum, that marked the character of the heiress—would talk of superficial attractions, fashionable folly, and the whole catalogue of the young lady's foibles.

A time, however, was coming to try his intentions. Miss Wrexham had never been able, even for a day, to conceal her feelings in regard to the handsome stranger. What had brought her to the castle was, the hope of gleaning some account of him. The Mr. Ladbrookes, she knew, were his friends; and she was surprised that none of her deep-laid plans of discovering who, what, and where he was, had yet met with any satisfaction.

"What do you want to know for?" at length asked the squire, in return to an ambushed attack she had made upon him, and rather disconcerting her by the plainness of the question. "He is a poor

poor fellow," he added, "not worth a thought: what can possess you to think about him?"

Miss Wrexham paused a moment, and then replied—"Perhaps it is better to confess at once I love him. You say he is poor?" she asked, turning towards the squire; "but if he is your friend, Mr. Ladbroke, tell him there is one, who in requital for his favour, will bestow herself, and her wealth upon him."

"Suppose he declines your offer?"

"Oh, name not the conjecture!" she replied; "faithful hearts are too scarce, wealth too precious, to give reason for the supposition."

The squire smiled, and said—"But suppose, on a more intimate acquaintance, you yourself should reject him?"

The thing was impossible; and by her quick pacing up and down the apartment, she shewed plainly her impatience.

The squire saw this was no moment

for trifling, and he said—"What will you give me then, if I bring him to you?"

She stopped suddenly in her progress across the chamber—her eyes glowed with gratitude and animation—"Give you!" she repeated, "the finest horse that shall ever be in your stable!"

"Agreed," said the squire, taking the hand she offered him; "and what shall we do," he added, "if this little hand fails to fulfil its contract?"

"How?" she asked, not understanding him.

"Suppose," he said, "when the gentleman appears, you protest you will have nothing to say to him."

The supposition was absurd, even in idea; and she smiled as she said—"If I do not marry him, it will not be my own fault." She put her hand upon her heart to still its transient riot. "Do you know him," she said reproachfully, "and can ask the question!"

The

The squire smiled in turn, as he continued—"But what will you do, Miss Wrexham, should my doubts be fulfilled; that is, what is to become of this little hand," for he still retained it, "should it shrink from my friend, and, I again repeat, fail to fulfil its intention?"

"I shall not then care what becomes of it," she said sorrowfully—"You may have it—any body may have it."

It was not a very distinguishing proffer; but the squire pressed it to his lips, and replied—"Be it so then, Miss Wrexham; this hand is mine, unless you marry the stranger."

The anxiety with which Miss Wrexham looked forward to her interview with the person in question, was a source of merriment to all within the castle; the pleasures of the present hour were looked over, in the expectation of those that were to come; and the squire had to wait with patience till such time as she

had seen her prodigy, for any portion of her attention. But Miss Wrexham reposed in the lap of security; though she had failed in one effort of her choice, yet her acquaintance with the world led her to believe that she was too important a personage, for the acceptance of herself and wealth to be rejected as a ~~thing~~ and she therefore waited impatiently for the moment that was to bring her her heart's desire.

Sir John Grafton and his niece came to the castle, to pay a long-promised visit at the time appointed. They travelled on horseback, and Miss Wrexham, who knew the day—nay, the very hour they were to come, was too agitated and overpowered by her sensations, to rise to the window to take one glance at the stranger.

When she thought of his perfections, she was surprised at the boldness of her undertaking; but it was now too late,  
and

and she obeyed Mrs. Ladbrooke's ~~sum-~~mons and left her chamber.

It is impossible to describe the various feelings that thronged her bosom, while descending the stairs to the sitting-room. A hundred times she was on the point of retreating; then upbraiding herself with weakness, she again continued her progress. Indeed, self-gratification would not be slighted; she approached the door, and with an effort that required all her powers, she opened it, and found herself in the apartment.

Only one stranger however was there, and that was sir John Grafton; but she recollected seeing him on the same day she had seen "*her own stranger*;" therefore, as he was a link in her great chain of events, she received him with conciliating attention.

In a few moments a "*yoicks tally ho!*" resounded through the air, and the head of the unknown appeared peeping from

the garden through the high sash-window. The squire looked alarmed, for he expected to see Sybella jump through it; and though her head did very well to continue the illusion, yet the petticoat of her habit, he knew must destroy the scene before he had sufficiently enjoyed it.

Sybella, however, measured the height of the leap, and, with a knowing shake of the head, declined it.

"Where is John?" she asked, in tones whose musical sweetness struck to the heart of Miss Wrexham, looking round the room for him at the same time with anxious affection.

"He will be here in a minute," the squire returned.

"He is a neat youth!" she replied; "he promised just now to meet me at the stables; but I suppose he is gone to dress. I hate such 'Jack-a-dandies!'"

This was better than could have been expected ;

expected; and the squire, rubbing his hands with glee, bent down to the heiress, and asked her what she thought of him?

“Do not talk to me,” she said, “and what is more, do not at present introduce me.” She put her hand before her eyes, as though to shut out the image that filled them.—“Never did I see,” she continued, “such a creature! excuse me, Mr. Ladbroke, but your friend unites all the best gifts of nature! and as I look at him, I cease to wonder at my strange infatuation.”

Gerald could not repress a smile, which perceiving, she said—“Do not laugh at me, but tell me if you ever before saw such elegance of form, such melody of voice, vivacity of eye, and expression of countenance, betraying a mind observing and intelligent! tell me, I say, did you ever see all these before so truly united?”

Gerald bowed to her, and the action implied a compliment.

“Nonsense!”



"Nonsense!" she said, "I cannot feel flattered by a comparison; as well might you compare me with Antinous!"

Gerald again smiled, but Sybella spoke, and it passed without notice.

She had been looking round anxiously for her cousin; and, as she saw him coming along the lawn, she exclaimed—"Do look, uncle, with what alacrity John performs the duties of a lover!" The person she alluded to was walking most leisurely towards them. "The fleeting shadows do not fly so fast!" she said, with a satirical motion of the eye. "At this rate, he would beat Berkley hollow!" John saw her, and increased his speed. "Do not hurry yourself, sir," she said, with a reproachful, yet, at the same time, an affectionate manner; "you will be here time enough for those who want you."

There was, nevertheless, a *fierté* in her voice that rather alarmed Miss Wrexham;

ham; and with some trepidation she asked Gerald, what his friend was annoyed at?

"Nothing," he replied; "it is a way he has; it is nothing to be frightened at; you see how soon it is evaporating."

Sybella shook hands with John as he came up to her; and looking intently into his eyes while she held his hand, she said—"What a reprobate you are, John! but I know you." She brushed his hair from his forehead, as she continued—"The winds may blow, and the waves may arise; but, thank Heaven! there are no hidden rocks, no lee-shore for me to deal with; I know just the extent of the feeling you possess towards me."

The squire dared not trust the scene further, therefore, to disturb it, he said—"Sib, why do you not come round? here is a lady who wishes to be introduced to you; my friend Sib—Miss Wrexham," introducing them.

Sybella touched her hat, and the heiress,

heiress, blushing rosy red, returned the salutation. "I think, ma'am, we have met before?" Sybella said, regarding the heiress at the same time, with what she considered a *promising* attention.

Miss Wrexham's heart bounded; and her eyes sparkled with pleasure, as bowing, she replied—"She believed she had had the honour."

"There, John! she says '*honour*!'" Sybella repeated, turning round laughingly to her cousin.—"You said it was a *disgrace*, John." Then again, speaking to Miss Wrexham, she continued—"If I mistake not, you saw me ride the race at ——?"

Never was Miss Wrexham more at a loss for words! and while envying, as much as admiring the stranger's ease, she again bowed her head in the affirmative.

"And what did *you* think of me?" Sybella asked, looking archly towards her

her cousin at the same time, in a manner that seemed to say; she knew but too well *his* opinion. "I believe," she continued, "had **this** man had his way, he would have sent me where old Pluto sent Piero Loderini; that is, 'with brainless babes to dwell in limbo.' I cannot describe the fuss he made! pray, ma'am, what did you think of it?"

Her fine eyes were rivetted on the heiress to hear her opinion; and taking off her hat, she rubbed up her hair in a manner that testified her impatience. Her words were always uttered with the same tone of sweetness—a sweetness that, in spite of her rough diction, could not fail of pleasing her hearers. Miss Wrexham thrilled as she listened to it; and, in her admiration, forgot that an answer was required.

Sybella smiled at what she considered her inattention.

"I suppose she forgets all about it?"  
she

she said, turning for an answer towards her cousin.

"I never shall forget it!" Miss Wrexham replied, in an impressive tone, that she intended should excite a sensation in the heart of the stranger

"Tut!" Sybella exclaimed, in a manner between mirth and shame-facedness, flying, at the same time, away from the window. "I hope you are not going to preach me a sermon!"

The best part of the play the squire thought was coming; and he waited with impatience to see Sybella, *in full length*, make her appearance. In a few moments the door opened; and seeming as though she understood the part she was performing, it was left ajar, and only her head was allowed to enter.

"Then you do not approve my 'wild oats?'" she said to Miss Wrexham, returning immediately to the old subject.

"But where was the harm?" she asked;

"do

"do not I ride every day? races too! And where was the difference, I say, in doing it without all these tags and rags, instead of impeding my horse's speed by the flutter of them?" She struck her petticoat with her handwhip. "Tell me, what was the odds, pray? though, would you believe it! John there flew into such a passion, that though he lost the *heat*, the chances were that he would gain *a fever*."

Miss Wrexham could not understand any of her allusions; but it was sufficient for her that the stranger spoke, to be charmed. The being that stood so near her, in her eyes was so bright in beauty, that like a gem it sparkled amid its own brightness; while the matter of the words uttered passed from her, lost in the melody of their delivery.

It is true that Sybella shone in any thing better than conversation, for, though from her youth and eccentricity,  
all

all she said possessed the power of pleasing, yet there was a slang betrayed sometimes in her words and manner, that in a less prepossessing person might have met with a very different reception. Brought up under the eye of an affectionate uncle, who considered nothing she did objectionable, all she thought, she said; till her *tendresse* for her cousin John created a timidity in her own powers, which rather restrained their indulgence.

The whimsicality, however, of her behaviour often cheated him into a smile, when he intended to have looked his condemnation; and he was laughing by her side, while she continued her conversation with Miss Wrexham, and urging her to enter the apartment.

"And so I will," she said; still, however, holding the lock of the door, and drawing it sufficiently near her, for it yet to shade her—"I am not ashamed

at

at all, I can tell you, for what I have done; though you, and the young lady there, look as dolorous as though it was a Cato-street conspiracy. I hate such dogmatism!" laying a scornful stress upon the first syllable of the word, as though it was made to express her angry opinion.

There seemed no more entertainment for the squire; the recollection of the lecture she had received again rankled in Sybella's mind; and, unaccustomed to conceal her feelings, she pettishly pushed the door from her, and with her finger to her lip, like a pouting child in a sullen mood, walked into the room and threw herself down in the corner of a sofa.

Nothing could exceed Miss Wrexham's amazement! she looked at the sulky girl before her, and then turned towards the window and the door, almost again expecting there to see her hero; for



for she could hardly believe her eyes, which plainly pointed out to her the female to be the stranger.

In a moment, however, all uncertainty was ended by sir John Grafton's saying — "How can you make yourself such a fool, Sib? if you play at dog and cat, in this fashion, before matrimony, what do you think is to become of you afterwards? kiss, I say, and be friends directly."

Sybella did as she was bid; and if Miss Wrexham had any doubts remaining, the seeing the handsome stranger resting fondly in the arms of her cousin, must have dispelled them.

After the first surprise — "What do you think of our comedy?" asked the squire, who stood anxiously waiting for the heiress to betray some emotion.

She smiled and replied — "Rather say your *pantomime*, in which that young lady has played *Harlequin a merveilles!*

not

not saying a word about the *Pantaloon*, considering who has supported the character!"

There was a sadness couched under the laugh that burst from her: the squire saw, pitied, and took advantage of the struggle; and taking her hand, and resting it on his arm, they left the room together.

"The turf this year brings forth a plantane, the next a daisy," repeated the squire to himself; for the silence of the heiress left him room for meditation—"but the daisy, at present, will suit my purpose." Still all was silent. "So much the better! so much the worse!"

"What is so much the worse?" asked Miss Wrexham.

The squire started—for he knew not his thoughts had been partly uttered aloud—hesitated; then added, with readiness—"Why that we cannot be married to-day, because of the devilish licence and settlements."

CHAPTER XIII.  
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WHAT had been the actuating principle was known only to himself; but the squire's marriage with Miss Wrexham left Maria and Valentine at liberty to follow his example.

The consent of the rector and his lady was readily given; they had seen too much of Maria's worth to stand in the way of their son's happiness; and in the quiet life he was about to lead they thought no one so calculated as Maria to ensure it. With this, there was nothing to prevent an immediate visit to Westcombe Hall; and elate with joy, at the prospect of so soon meeting again
with

with her he loved, Valentine set forth on his journey

“The sun and moon, Rosalie, could sooner alter their course than I could forget poor Valentine,” said Maria, in reply to her sister’s persuasive arguments to give him up, and to encourage the attentions of lord Charles Standen “It is out of the bounds of possibility” she continued; “besides, why so anxious? for, supposing I were to do it, what is there to recompense me?”

“The different life you would lead to that which awaits you in the country. Lord Charles is as rich as any man about town; therefore, as his wife, you might set the fashions, drive an uncommon carriage, in short, obtain distinction in any way you chose to deserve it.”

Maria repeated the word—“*Distinction!*” and said, “it is a thing that never enters my wishes.”

Lady Delaware laughed, and replied—"Spare yourself the task, dear girl, of specifying it; your whole conduct is sufficient to establish it: and knowing we were born of the same parent, I could never enough express my surprise, was not the faculty all exhausted in another quarter, what his lordship can see in you to attract him!"

Maria smiled, and with a little flutter of vanity, replied—"Nay, Rosalie, you see me when pining, and giving way to the saddening recollections of past days—he only sees me in company."

Her sister laughed outright, as she said—"And *how* does he see you?" placing herself in the caricature attitude of a Madonna; "if I were in a wood, I could not give way to such a disfigurement to beauty."

"Perhaps he admires the pensive character?"

"If he does, the world is deceived in him :

him: and when I think of the sprightly *belles*, armed at all points, whom I have seen him tantalizing to death, with his *promising* attentions, I cannot, I say, but wonder what he sees in you to please him."

"The love of variety."

"Variety indeed!" glancing at Maria's dress.

Maria looked at it also—it was plain, but neat; and as some excuse for it, she said—"You know I was never an *amateur* in dress, sister."

"There is no necessity for that; but, without the least pains in the world, one would think you might manage to look better. I never saw such a figure as you generally are; and to-day, when I wished you to look particularly well, you certainly are looking worse than ever."

Maria laughed to see her sister so interested, as she continued—"What do

you mean by variety?" alluding to what she had said; "if it is variety, it must be like the song, 'variety in one,' for, to me, you seem to make no change. A gown to you is a gown, and on it goes, rain or shine, young lords or old ladies. A snail is not more attached to his house than you are to the thing that comes uppermost." "I must say, you would be an excellent wife for a poor man, though I still hope to make you a convert.

"Never!" Maria emphatically replied. "I think with that author, who remarked, that he always confounded the terms of *convert* and *convict* together. But there is a ring at the hall-bell," hurrying away as she spoke; "if it is lord Charles, do tell him——"

"That you are a little simpleton," interrupted her sister, "who not only sits in her own light, but exerts herself to put out her own candle."

In

In passing over an angle of the hall, Maria caught sight of Valentine; in a moment she was clasped in his fond embrace.—“Are you still my own Maria?” he asked, gazing affectionately upon her.

“For ever and ever!” she replied, and led him forward into the room where she had left her sister.

Lord Charles Standen, who made one of the party who that day met at the Hall, could not fail to see that his prospects were undergoing a severe blight by the presence of Valentine; but too confident in himself not to believe, that when he *did* make up his mind to come forward, he should be well received, he resolved to strive to the utmost to ingratiate himself during the dinner; and with the stimulus of a few extra glasses of wine, to make his proposal in the evening. With this he was more troublesome to Maria than ever. Although

sitting on the opposite side of the table, yet peeping through the Apollos and Cupids of the *plateau*, every word he spoke was addressed to her; and when the voices of the company were too in *alt* to allow him to be heard, signs and nods still continued the communications he desired to convey to her.

But with Valentine by her side, to Maria's wit, lost its point, and increment its excitation; she saw—heard nothing, but him she loved; and lord Charles, provoked with her want of taste, found he must proceed to *extremes*, as he termed it, before he could command her attention. He was among the first to join the party in the drawing-room, full of spirits and confidence, yet with a sort of fluttering at his heart, which he set down to the account of a very healthy, robust fit of love, that, he made sure, would carry him on, at least, through the honeymoon, without one
murmur

murmur of regret at the state of slavery he had fallen into.

Until he had met Maria, nothing could have persuaded him that he should ever consent to such thralldom. In vain had every mamma, in the set which he moved, tickled, and made court to him; the fish was not to be had—the sidelong glances had failed in their effect; and in spite of the most marked advances from every gentle angel that he met, lord Charles remained single. Now, however, things were changed; and lord Charles's hopes, in regard to Maria, seemed to depend on making himself agreeable. There was a pleasing excitation in the novelty of the thing; and he sought, with as much anxiety as Caleb Quotem did at the review, "to get a good place" to make the attempt in.

Every thing seemed to appear in a new light that attached to Maria, and lost nothing from the change; yet he, who could always find a chair conveniently

niently placed near every *belle* he chose to approach, was surprised, in the present instance, at the obstacles and difficulties that impeded him.

The Hellespont however could not separate Hero and Leander; and in spite of all, lord Charles was soon established by the side of Maria. In vain was it that her manner was short, abrupt, and uneasy; baiting his hook with flattery, and throwing out a net of alluring advantages, he made his proposals, and received for himself, his title, and his estates, a decided refusal. In vain was it that he supported a whining tone for an hour, and indulged in the bitterest moanings; Maria was sorry to grieve him, but she could do nothing for him; therefore, as a *dernier resort*, he changed his mode of attack, and his expression of countenance at the same time, and made application to her aunt, her brother, and her sister.

“ Lord Charles for ever ” was clearly expressed

expressed in their countenances; and Maria feared she should have much opposition to undergo, in carrying her heart's dearest interests. All, indeed, became advocates in his favour; and vain was it for Maria to allege her plighted faith for another.

The *dowager* lady Delaware, who began now to feel a pride in her niece, could not hear her talk with any patience.—“ You are not competent to judge for yourself,” she said; “ we must take the reins of government into our own hands, and decide for you; and this decision is, that you must get out of this foolish engagement as fast as you can, and then consent to marry his lordship. It is no laughing matter,” she said, rather impatiently to her son, who was chuckling in a corner—“ what is it, John, makes you so merry ?”

He steadied his countenance as well as he could, and replied—“ It is indeed as you say,

say, mother, no laughing matter;" then turning to Maria, he put on a ludicrous voice, and said, with Justice Shallow—"I will not excuse you; you shall not be excused; excuses shall not be admitted; there is no excuse shall serve; you shall not be excused: Mistress Maria, do as you are bid, and marry."

"I cannot, John," she said, imploringly.

"It is a fery discretion answer," he replied, flying from the part of Shallow to that of Slender; then turning to his mother, he said—"Likes and dislikes are an obtuse speculative research for the curious inquirer, and have puzzled some of the wisest." The setting forth reasons for preference, is as ridiculous as the attempt to controvert it. The *beau ideal* is in one's own mind; and with indefatigable faith we establish all the qualities that delight us into one object, whom (though it matters not) perhaps
has

has no one legitimate claim to any one of them. *Mais n'emporte*; this is the creature that seduces our fancy; therefore, this is the creature that perverts our judgment; and as well might you bay at the moon, like a dog, as attempt to turn your thorough-bred lovers! Oh, they are an obstinate set! but the quality is supported by precedent. Fraud and delusion pass current, from the vanity of the attempt to uncloak them. The lover indeed chooses to see things as he pleases, not as the world advises; and in the short-sightedness of passion, takes those things for beauties which time only can draw the veil from."

"You talk like a book, John," said his mother, interrupting him; "I never heard you bring forth such nonsense!"

The baronet bowed and smiled, as he pretended to take it for a compliment, and replied—"You do me too much honour; but here comes one who will perhaps

perhaps talk more to the purpose; and enforce upon your comprehension the waste of labour it is to form schemes to thwart the inclinations of such wilful, capricious, interested beings as men and women. Let them go their way, mother," he said, putting Maria's hand into Valentine's, as he entered the apartment—"let them keep 'honest Jack' in countenance next Thursday; or, take my word, if you withhold your permission, you will only have a *third* edition of Hearts *versus* Heads, or Diamond cut Diamond.

THE END.

